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1859.

THE

MAN OF BUSINESS;

OR,

STOKESHILL PLACE.

BY

MRS. GORE.

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THE

MAN OF BUSINESS;

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CHAPTER I.

Well!—I cannot last for ever!—It were better to be eaten to death with rust, than to be scoured to nothing with perpetual motion.

SHAKSPEARE.

'THE horses are at the door, Sir,' said a spruce, well-powdered footman, throwing open the library of Stokeshill Place, where sat his master Mr. Barnsley, before a writing table covered with papers;—immersed in the business of the county and country, which left him little leisure to attend to his own.

A quarter of an hour—half an hour elapsed; and still Mr. Barnsley, deaf to the hint, hung, pen in hand, over his desk; when John, not having chosen to notice the nod addressed in reality to his announcement, but apparently to the quire of writing-paper occupying his master's attention, again ventured to intrude, with an intimation that the horses were waiting. The 'Very well' vouchsafed in reply, was now too distinctly audible to admit of further interference.

John retired in despair to the servants' hall; satisfied that the mare, which by his master's orders had been saddled precisely at two o'clock to ride over to Westerton, was fated to stand in the shade of the great chestnut-tree gracing the court-yard, till the arrival of the post hour

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should give the signal for Mr. Barnsley's release from his epistolary labours.

But John, who had engagements of his own to which he wished to be more punctual, could not patiently resign himself to the loss of his cricket-match; and when the stable clock chimed a quarter to four, he once more made his appearance in the library—screening himself from his master's displeasure, under the sacred character of a herald, by requesting to know, in the name of Robert the groom, whether 'the mare would be wanted?'

Thus apostrophized, Mr. Barnsley looked wistfully from his Bath post, towards the library time-piece; and perceiving the hands to be advancing towards five o'clock, when he himself ought to have been advancing towards the town of Westerton at the hour of three, started up, desired John to light his taper, and hastily sealing the three letters already completed, placed them in post-bag array, and shut up the unfinished fourth in his desk.

'Are the horses to come round, Sir?'—inquired John, fancying himself already at the wickets on Stokeshill Green.

'No!—desire Miss Barnsley to step into the library.'

'And Miss Winston, Sir?' demanded John; who, accustomed to see his young lady constantly attended by her governess, had begun to regard them as swan and shadow.

'No!—only Miss Margaret. Tell her that I am in haste, and wish to see her immediately.'

And while John hurried across the hall and vestibule towards the morning-room in which the young lady of Stokeshill and her preceptress usually passed the morning, Mr. Barnsley gathered together the hat, gloves, and riding-cane, prepared for him by the footman; and with the hat on his head and cane under his arm, stood drawing on his gloves at the window, as if in the utmost hurry for departure, when Margaret's gentle step traversed the floor, and his daughter stood beside him.

'You sent for me, papa?'

'Yes, my dear. I have, unfortunately, only a few moments to spare. I am in the greatest haste—two hours behind-hand in an appointment with Dobbs and the surveyors at Westerton, about the new toll-house! But it is indispensable that I should say a word to you, Margaret,

before I go out. I have received a letter, since breakfast, from Mr. Sullivan, of Hawkhurst, proposing for you, for his son Edward.'

'*Proposing for me.*—Edward Sullivan?'

'Edward Sullivan!—I don't wonder you are surprised. I was amazed myself. A year or two hence might have been time enough to think of such a thing. However, the proposal is made, and must of course be answered. Old Sullivan has done things as handsomely as his estate and nature would allow. He undertakes to settle a thousand a year; but I need not trouble you with particulars. Indeed, I am in such a confounded hurry, that it is impossible to explain myself more fully; but while I am at Westerton, you and Miss Winston can make out a civil letter to the young man, stating how much you feel honoured, and so forth. About your motives for refusing him, you can say what you like;—that you feel too young to think of matrimony,—that you do not wish to quit me at present,—in short, what you please.'

'But *must* I write?' demanded Margaret, with a deep blush. 'Surely, as Mr. Sullivan referred himself to *you*, the answer ought to come from yourself.'

'Oh! there was a letter enclosed from Ned Sullivan,—a young man's nonsensical letter. I have locked it up somewhere in my desk, I will give it you another time. You must, of course, express yourself grateful for the kind sentiments it contains; and tell him that you are not . . .: but Miss Winston will instruct you better than I can what it is the custom for young ladies to say on such occasions. Let the letter be written before I come back, Margaret; for I shall send off one of the men to Hawkhurst, as soon as possible. There are some ugly holes in the lane between the woodlands and the common; and I scarcely like to venture one of my horses there on a dark night. There is no moon, I think?'

'No, papa.'

'Then make haste, my dear, and write your letter. Let them know, in the servants' hall, that dinner must be put back till seven o'clock. I shan't get away from Westerton till half-past six.'

And clapping his hat upon his head, and buttoning his

coat with a fussy, anxious jerk, away went Barnsley to squabble with parish-surveyors and overseers; leaving his gentle Margaret to do battle against her scarcely less uneasy meditations.

Instead of returning immediately to the governess and the carpet-work, as by his leaving open the library door her father probably anticipated, Margaret closed it gently, and returned to the library chair just vacated by Mr. Barnsley.

She had received a shock not instantly to be overcome. Margaret was just seventeen; had never been at a ball; and the nearest approach to a novel placed within her reach was the incomparable, but certainly not romance-inspiring Robinson Crusoe. Her notions of love were purely instinctive; her notions of marriage, the matter-of-fact suggestions of the governess. Miss Winston had sometimes vaguely alluded to the period of her being 'settled in life,' just as in earlier childhood she had announced the probability of measles and whooping-cough. But any minute consideration of so forbidden and delicate a topic, was out of the question.

Margaret had, from time to time, been disturbed in her lessons of geography and chronology by her father coming in with news that his friend Sullivan's niece, or his friend Holloway's daughter was going to be married; and Margaret being aware that Lady Maria Burckhurst had attained her eight and twentieth year, and that Eliza Holloway had been for ten long seasons the belle of Canterbury races, concluded that marriage was an event not likely to disturb the smooth domestic economy of Stokeshill, for full ten years to come. She felt that she must 'come out;' must appear at a given number of races and assize balls, music-meetings and archery-meetings, before the subject need enter into her calculations.

The thunderbolt, however, had fallen!—She had actually received an offer,—had been inadvertently, and without warning, on the eve of 'being settled!'—Had her father so willed it, a few weeks might have seen her Mrs. Edward Sullivan of Hawkhurst Hill! A thrill of surprise, almost of terror, passed through her heart, as she leaned her elbow on the writing-table and her head upon her hand, to contemplate all the responsibilities she had been on the point of incurring!

With Edward Sullivan she had fancied herself, the preceding evening, intimately acquainted. During the last two years, Edward had been a frequent visitor at Stokeshill; and she had even noticed his habit of fixing himself at the tea-table or work-table with Miss Winston and herself, in preference to joining the group of politicians or parish-icians so apt to dispute away the evening after her father's dinner-parties,—highly commending his distaste for these wrangling witenagemots of the country gentlemen, their neighbours. But hitherto, his habit of joining Mr. Barnsley and Mr. Barnsley's daughter in their daily ride, had escaped her notice. Hawkhurst and Stokeshill being but five miles apart, she thought nothing more natural than that they should frequently meet in the woods and green lanes intervening. But Margaret now espied design where previously she had discerned only accident. She saw that Edward Sullivan had been seeking her society, when she fancied him intent only on escaping the pompous monotony of his father's house at Hawkhurst. She saw, in short, that she had been wooed without knowing it; and sought as a wife, where she was scarcely conscious of being preferred as an acquaintance. Yes! Edward Sullivan had actually proposed to make her his; to pass his life with her; to unite their destinies for ever!

But were their destinies, if thus united, likely to have proved happy?—Margaret raised her blushing cheek from her hand as she asked herself the question; for though alone, she blushed at familiarly entertaining an idea from which Miss Winston had scrupulously taught her to recede; and though excused to her conscience, by the great event of the day, for pausing to contemplate the subject, she was forced to admit herself a very incompetent judge of the question. What did she know of Edward, more than that he was a good shot, that he had a good seat on horseback, a good countenance, and tolerably good address; and that he was the second son of Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst Hill, one of the wealthiest proprietors of the county of Kent? They were neighbours' children, it is true, and had occasionally met in familiar acquaintance as long as Margaret could remember. But the greater part of Edward's life was passed at Harrow and Oxford; and his sojourns at home

had left a deeper impression on his own feelings than on those of Margaret Barnsley.

After half-an-hour's meditation upon his moral qualities and endowments, Margaret was forced to confess, that of the Edward Sullivan with whom the day before she had fancied herself so well acquainted, she knew little or nothing.

A second time she blushed, while admitting to herself that she should have liked to see and study Edward's letter of proposal, before she proceeded to reply. But she feared there might be impropriety in suggesting this to her father.

Her father had desired her to confer with Miss Winston touching the *terms* of her rejection; but no choice had been supposed possible; nor did Margaret feel injured by so peremptory a disposal of her destinies. She felt conscious that she was too young to marry—too young to be allowed to deliberate on such a point; for Edward had found no opportunity to enlarge her sense of her own rights or sensibilities.

All these cogitations ended in the recollection, that her letter was to be ready before her father's return from Westerton; and Margaret, sighing as she rose from the table, found that the time was come for consulting Miss Winston.

For the first time in her life, she felt disinclined to make Miss Winston's opinion as finite as a Median or Persian decree. She was persuaded her governess would be shocked that any one should have ventured to make a proposal of marriage to a child like herself; to her pupil—her automaton;—who had not yet quite completed her course of universal history, and was still occasionally reproved for the uneven stitches in her embroidery.

Still, the thing must be done. It was nearly six o'clock. The butler made his appearance in the library, to fetch the letters for the post-bag; and Margaret, as she took her father's three epistles from the writing table and placed them in Lawton's hand, perceived that one was addressed to John Fagg, Esq., Solicitor, 14, Lincoln's Inn; one to the Secretary of the Salamander Insurance Company; and one to the adjutant of the county militia.

Such was the urgency of the correspondence which had left Mr. Barnsley only seven minutes and three seconds, to debate with his only child on a measure involving her happiness for life!

CHAPTER II.

John, the Cricketer, was probably the only one at Stokeshill, whose rest that night was uninfluenced by the great event of the day. While *his* dreams were cheered by reminiscences of the innings of the morning, Margaret's serenity of mind was disturbed by striving to recall the exact terms in which she had attempted to convey her refusal to Edward Sullivan, without infraction of those dignities of the sex impressed upon her observance by Miss Winston. Barnsley lay awake nearly five minutes weighing the eligibilities of the divers chaperons within his reach, to undertake the first introduction of his daughter to society at the fêtes about to take place at Wynnex Abbey;—while the midnight cogitations of the poor governess were of a far less cheering description.

For twelve years past, Miss Winston had formed part of the establishment at Stokeshill; and Mr. Barnsley's engagement, that she should continue in the family till the marriage of her pupil, had seemed to promise happiness of half-a-dozen years' stability. She had been promoted to her office from a teachership at a boarding-school; and there was nothing in her former experience of the privations of life, to reconcile her to her prospects of penurious independence.

On quitting Mr. Barnsley's roof, her income would consist of one hundred and fifty pounds a-year, two-thirds of which arose from an annuity settled upon her by her patron; —her prospects in life —a blank! Her existence had been an easy one. Margaret was an affectionate, submissive child,—Mr. Barnsley too much occupied with county and parish business to interfere with her arrangements; and beyond Stokeshill, her pupil, and her pupil's father, she had not a tie on earth! For the governess insulated for twelve years in the family of which she is the hireling, abjures all connection with the external world. Yet, in her desolate

fiftieth year, she may be cast forth into the wilderness of the world; while high and low applaud the liberality of those who have doled out scanty bread to secure the remainder of her days from starvation.

There were moments, indeed, when poor Miss Winston felt that she should obtain an exceeding rich reward for all her self-denial, in the excellent results of the education she had bestowed on Margaret. But under the present shock of discovering that she might be called upon to resign her five years before she had calculated on any such calamity, all she could do was to weep a few bitter tears, and hope for the best.

'Margaret is very much grown, lately,' observed Mr. Barnsley, the following morning, at breakfast, laying down the newspaper which, according to the laudable custom of English gentlemen, he was in the habit of reading during the meal, so as to necessitate silence among the rest of the party.

'Do you think so, sir?' replied Miss Winston. 'She holds herself better than last year; which may make a difference.'

'You will soon be seventeen, I fancy?' resumed Barnsley, addressing his daughter, whose face was suffused with blushes at finding herself the object of such unusual consideration.

'My birth-day was last month, papa,' replied Margaret. And, as the day which witnessed the birth of his only child had also made him a widower, some surprise arose in even Miss Winston's unexcitable mind, that the anniversary should be so easily overlooked by Mr. Barnsley.

'Last month?—the 15th of September?—ay, very true! It must have been when I was over at Maidstone, at the sessions; it wholly escaped my memory. I have always intended, Margaret, that at seventeen you should take the head of my table. Miss Winston, of course, will see the propriety of my wish. We will begin from to-day.'

'Indeed, papa,' said Margaret, in a remonstrating voice, 'I feel so—'

'My dear, your papa wishes it,' interrupted Miss Winston; and with Miss Winston, Margaret never presumed to remonstrate.

'Henceforward, my dear,' resumed her father, pursuing his own train of reflections, 'I shall look to *you* as mistress of my establishment. With Miss Winston's advice, you will undertake the control of the house. At the end of the month, too, there is to be a ball at Wynnex Abbey, in honour of Lord Shoreham's coming of age; it will be an excellent opportunity for your introduction to the county. It is time, Margaret, you should learn something of the world. By the way, my dear, remind me to write out a draft for you on Closeman, after breakfast. You must have a new set of dresses, and I shall desire Hamlet (who has promised me the new icepails and tureens for next week) to send down a few ornaments for your selection. What stones do you prefer?'

Margaret looked towards Miss Winston for a reply.

'Pink topazes are very pretty,' suggested the governess—'I think, my dear, you would like pink topazes.'

'I am not fond of ornaments, papa,' said Margaret, venturing, for once, to have an opinion of her own.

'You have never yet had occasion to be full-dressed. Now you are coming out, you must appear as becomes Miss Barnsley of Stokeshill. *My* daughter must not be less handsomely set off than others of our position in the county.'

'As you are so kind as to give me my choice, then,' said Margaret, taking courage, 'I should prefer a pearl necklace.'

And the submissive girl, who had not presumed to have an opinion of her own in the choice of her husband, trembled at having ventured to express a preference in the selection of a necklace.

It happened to be the day of the weekly justice-meeting at Westerton; and immediately after breakfast, Mr. Barnsley's horses were again announced by John. The justice-meeting was to Barnsley, what the Italian Opera may be supposed to be to a fine lady; and away went papa, his head cleared of all thought of drafts or necklaces, by the necessity of arming himself with certain parochial documents to be laid before his brother magistrates, Mr. Holloway of Whitshamstead Hall, Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst Hill, and Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge. Even his favourite mare, as she stood at the door, seemed to have imbibed the fidgety, fussy

air, assumed by her master on these memorable days—the golden ones of the calendar to the man of business.

Barnsley was, in fact, a notable exemplification of the adage, that—

Just as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.

His father, a man retired from trade with sufficient fortune to make himself comfortable without the ambition of making himself ridiculous, had procured for his eldest son a cavalry commission in India, and given to John, his youngest, a plain, useful education at the Tonbridge Grammar School; where he was likely to form no aristocratic connections to inspire him with a taste for a betting, instead of a day-book, or the St. Leger instead of the ledger.

Young John, who, like his father, possessed a calculating head, having obtained meanwhile one of the exhibitions attached to the Tonbridge school, entertained ardent hopes of stamping his scholarship current by a degree at the university, preparatory to entering one of the learned professions. But the old man had too much worldly wisdom under his Welch wig to hazard any such precarious attempt.

'My money's of my own making; and Kitty, Sally, and Jane, must share and share alike with Clement and yourself. Each of you will touch a matter of five thousand pounds; which won't do to fall back upon, in case of failure in a profession,' quoth the old man, when applying his paternal shears to the wings of John Barnsley's ambition; 'so I've just articled you, my boy, to my old friends Winchmore and Trannis, of the Adelphi, as respectable a house of business in the attorney line, as any in Lon'on town. Take my word for't, Jack, they'll put you in the way of making good bread.'

Against such a sentence, John knew there was no appeal: and thus,—nailed to the desk—his aspirations soon limited themselves to the level of the high horse-hair stool, on which the remainder of his youth was to be pounce-and-parchmented away. Barnsley, from a steady lad, became a prudent young man; and fortune, whose mysterious wheel rolls its way into such strange holes and corners, found means to detect John Barnsley in his obscure office in the Adelphi.

It happened that Mr. Abraham Trannis, who, despite his

three-score years and twelve, rejoiced in the title of junior partner in the firm of Winchmore and Co., was a rich oddity —*very* rich and *very* odd—such as the present century has beheld only in the impersonations of Munden. Late in life, he had married his housekeeper, and lost her too soon after the marriage, to find leisure for repentance; more especially as she had bequeathed him a daughter, to afford some excuse to himself in quitting the world, for the rigid parsimony and devotion to business by which he had rendered his sojourn there a period of penance.

But in the course of his long attorneyship, Trannis had obtained so much insight into the perils and dangers environing an heiress's career, that as Mary advanced towards womanhood and his daily glance at his looking-glass showed him his well-worn caxon a world too wide for his shrunk cheeks, he grew uneasy at the notion of leaving his daughter and his ducats to the mercy of the fops of the west end. He wished to see her settled before he died; and, as his ambition extended rather to the preservation of his hoard than to its augmentation, could think of nothing better than to treat with his old friend Barnsley for his steady son John to become his son-in-law, just as his friend Barnsley had treated with himself to make the said John his clerk.

The matter was speedily arranged. To Barnsley's prospective five thousand pounds, the prudent attorney added five and twenty thousand down, by way of dowry; and the promise of his share in the business and the remainder of his fortune, at his decease. The amount of that remainder had often afforded a topic of conjecture to the clerks in his office, as they gossipped, with their quills behind their ears, during the luncheon of their principals. John Barnsley had heard it surmised at fifty thousand pounds; and as his heart was somewhat of the consistency of one of the skins of parchment which his life was passed in engrossing, the proposition of the old gentleman was accepted with as much avidity, as is the mitre of Durham by the lowliest minded of *nolo episcoparians*.

When, on the following Sunday, Mary Trannis was introduced into her father's dining-room, from the boarding-school at Kensington from whence she was chaperoned by Miss Winston, then one of the teachers, John Barnsley

beheld a fair, delicate, elegant girl,—he was perhaps the only young man on whom fortune could have heaped such an excess of favours, without inspiring the sentiment that the lovely bride, thus forced upon his acceptance, was the most precious of them all.

What Mary thought of her intended husband is comparatively unimportant; the old gentleman was delighted. The Barnsley family exerted themselves to the utmost to do honour to so auspicious an alliance. Their house was thrown open for feasting and hospitality; and old Mr. Trannis, after a round of dinners with the father, grandmother, uncles and aunts of his son-in-law, caught an inflammatory cold from the too frequent use of his silk waistcoat and Sunday wig,—and died!

Had the event occurred only five weeks before, Mary Trannis would have found herself heiress to one hundred and thirty-five thousand pounds, encumbered only with her fair person and feminine disposition. As it was, her noble inheritance was rendered abortive by a husband of vulgar mind and disagreeable manners.—Her fate was sealed.

Even amidst the pre-occupation arising from his extraordinary accession of property, young Barnsley found leisure to note that his young wife was of what he considered a sadly moping disposition. His sisters observed, that Mrs. John had weak spirits; his father, that she had weak health. But a convenient solution was found for her despondency, in the recent death of her father; and it argued strongly in honour of filial instinct, that her tears should flow so abundantly for the loss of a parent seventy-three years of age, with whom, during her whole lifetime, she had never held half-an-hour's uninterrupted conversation.

In the course of six months, however, Mrs. Barnsley's countenance put forth a rainbow! Her husband, whose love of consequence exceeded even his love of business, having determined to render the Trannis share of the Adelphi office a sleeping partnership, purchased a beautiful estate in the county of Kent. His chum, at the Tonbridge grammar-school, was the son of a certain Sir Ralph Woodgate, of Stokeshill Place, near Westerton; and Barnsley's spleen and envy had often been excited by his schoolfellow's vaunt-

ings of the Baronet's manorial rights, and the magnificence of the halls, parlours, paddocks, and preserves of Stokeshill Place. In the absence of some grounds for reciprocal boast, Stokeshill was a sharp thorn in Barnsley's side. He grew to consider it a finer thing than Eridge, Knowle, Penshurst, or even Windsor Castle; and when, a few months after the opening of old Trannis's will, a newspaper advertisement acquainted him that the said estate of Stokeshill, with its manors, halls, parlours, paddocks, and preserves, was to be sold by private contract, Barnsley concluded his bargain for the long-coveted territory with such unattorneyish precipitancy, that the outlay of thirty-five thousand pounds was supposed to exceed the positive value of the purchase, by nearly fifteen hundred.

Even this extra expenditure, however, brought its rate of interest; for young Mrs. Barnsley, so sad and so silent in London, recovered some degree of health and spirits from the moment of settling in the country. She, whose young life had been droned away between a city and its suburbs, now tasted for the first time the enjoyment of fields and flowers, of shade and sunshine. The gardens and woods of Stokeshill seemed to animate her into new existence. She was almost well,—almost happy,—almost cheerful;—and Mary's character had just begun to adapt itself to the mechanical routine of her new duties, when her innocent life was required of her; she died in giving birth to a daughter!—

CHAPTER III.

The new proprietor of Stokeshill Place, to whom his young wife had been always Mrs. Barnsley, never Mary, and who respected her as the origin of his opulence, rather than as a being to be surrounded with the adoration which youthful bridegrooms lavish on such fair and gentle creatures, wore his broad hems with becoming gravity; engaged an excellent nurse for his little girl; and when the time for tuition came, sought out, as her governess, the favourite teacher under whose chaperonship he had first been presented to her mother.

This was a sacrifice on the part of Barnsley. Seven years

had elapsed since his first introduction to Miss Winston; and he was now disencumbered of every domestic tie associated with that ignoble epoch. For five years past, he had been a country gentleman. His parents were dead, his sisters married, and all his Barnsley and Trannis connexions obliterated. He had formed new friendships and acquaintanceships, of a degree correspondent with his higher modes of life.

Yet it was not excess of virtue that induced him to overlook the disadvantage of introducing into his establishment, almost the only surviving person familiar with the rise of his condition. His honours had come to sit too closely upon him, and were based on too strong a foundation, to admit of the smallest solicitude as to his place in public opinion. His selection of his wife's teacher to become governess to her daughter, arose from his experience of the dry, sober, uninquiring, uninterfering, character of the elderly spinster; and perhaps in some degree, from the hurried occupations which left him no leisure to seek out a more accomplished preceptress.

For Barnsley, in renouncing his professional business, seemed to have adapted that of all the world!—Young as he was, when he took possession of Stokeshill, he soon found himself to be the best man of business in the neighbourhood, and the neighbourhood confirmed his discovery. The habits of his clerkship clung to him. Vestry, quorum, electioneering,—he dealt with all and every thing like an attorney; not interestedly, or unfairly,—but litigiously and pragmatically. The country gentlemen, his neighbours, respected him; some as a man of probity,—some as a man of five thousand a year.—They knew vaguely that he had been 'bred to the law;' as were many men of fortune and family, fifty years ago, with a view to the legislation of their estates and the country; and his legal knowledge and lawyer-like activity, both of pen and person, if they rendered him occasionally a troublesome neighbour, rendered him, in the long run, a very useful acquaintance.

By the time Barnsley of Stokeshill had attained his forty-fifth year, the usual vicissitudes, brought about by the lapse of twenty years in every country neighbourhood, were perceptible in that of Westerton. Of the families which had

witnessed his inauguration, some were dispersed, some extinct; and in all but two instances, a new generation was reigning, in the stead of the one contemporaneous with his arrival at Stokeshill. Those who were later settlers in the county than himself, knew or cared little about the date of his naturalization; and the three great lawgivers of the district, (Lord Shoreham, who, from his rank;—old Holloway, who from his landed property;—and Sullivan who, from his antiquity of descent, might be suspected of cherishing disparaging sentiments towards the displacer of Sir Richard Woodgate), found him far too useful a neighbour to be treated with disrespect.

In certain times and places, he was in fact invaluable. Assizes, elections, road-bill committees, and turnpike meetings, confessed his influence; and, business apart, if indeed business could ever be a thing apart from Barnsley, he could boast good preserves on his manor, good wine in his cellar, a good understanding withthe gentlemen of the neighbouring hunt, and a good account with the bankers of the neighbouring town. From Wynnex Abbey down to Cinnamon Lodge, there was, accordingly, always a spare bed for Barnsley,—always a place at dinner parties for Barnsley—for Barnsley was a fellow who gave no trouble, and took infinite trouble for all the world. Had half the business he transacted, as an amateur at Stokeshill Place, been transacted in the John Doe and Richard Roe line, in the office from which even his sleeping partnership was now bought out, Barnsley would have doubled his income, though perhaps at the expense of his popularity.

Little as people are inclined to receive advice volunteered as that of a friend, most men love a legal opinion which they can get for nothing; and Barnsley's was known, by long experience, to be as good as the best to be had for money. Scarcely a country squire throughout England but has some pet lawsuit on his hands. In addition to his kinsfolk and acquaintance, tithes and tenants array against him new enemies for prosecution; trespasses upon his grounds not being classed among those towards which he is enjoined to forgiveness by the canons of the Christian faith. But from the moment Barnsley settled himself in the hundred of Westerton, all its outstanding aggressions and grievances

became trebly apparent; while others sprang daily to light, which had hitherto been microscopically undiscoverable. Pathways and causeways, rights of common and fishery, long abused and long neglected, were reclaimed and recovered under his auspices; and as the adviser of such recoveries was known to derive no profit from the law, (though, as Closeman the wag of Westerton was heard to observe, he seemed to give the law to the profits,) he escaped the ignominy and ill-will usually attached to his vocation.

Many people were surprised that a man of so stirring a turn of mind, did not dignify his habits of activity by devoting them to the service of the country. But Barnsley had fixed his fancy upon a certain road into parliament, and no other afforded him the least temptation. As yet, reformed representation was not; but Westerton was an open borough, displaying its openness like other boroughs of the time, by returning the two wealthiest landed proprietors within a certain distance of its town hall.

When Barnsley set up his staff at Stokeshill, the two sitting members were Holloway and Sullivan, both in the prime of life; and the only hope of a vacancy consisted in the possibility of Mr. Holloway's elevation to the peerage; or a breach between Sullivan and his constituents, occasioned by some outbreak of his haughty temper. Neither the one nor the other had yet occurred.

Still, Barnsley hoped on. Holloway and Sullivan, now styled in parlance of the borough, 'our old and respected members,' were breaking up under the influence of sedentary committees and a parliamentary atmosphere; and from session to session, from dissolution to dissolution, Barnsley's expectations of impending senatorship grew more distinct. Like some distant mansion forming at first a speck in the horizon, of which the progress of our journey makes gradually apparent the portico and windows, the door of the House of Commons seemed at length to stand open to John Barnsley, as 'the honourable member for Westerton.'

For the hundredth time, he complimented his own forbearance in having eschewed all other modes of sneaking into parliament. Not a dissolution for the last fifteen years, but he might have bought himself a seat with as much ease as one of the hall chairs of Stokeshill, on which, per con-

descension of the Herald's Office, a lion's head had been lately made to figure. But he had shunned the temptation; and preferred fulfilling towards old Holloway much such an office as that of coadjutor to a foreign archbishop, in order to keep up his interest with the borough. Westerton was Barnsley's mark!—*Aut Westertoniensis aut nihil.*

The secret of all this partiality—a secret unsuspected even by himself—consisted in his jealousy of his predecessors at Stokeshill. The Woodgates had been 'seated,' according to the phrase of road-books and county histories, at Stokeshill Place, time out of mind! In the reign of Richard II. Sir Ranulph de Woodgate of Stokeshill, had inscribed his name, with a gauntletted hand, on the then iron page of history; and the family had been connected one way or other with the chronicles of the county, throughout the five long grey-bearded centuries thence ensuing. An ill-fated race,—they had subsisted, rather than flourished. No change of kings or ministers, men or measures, seemed to bring prosperity to the Woodgates. As the parchment of their genealogy extended, that of their rent-roll grew less. Their lands were unrenewed by the manure of commercial gold; and every new scion of the ancient tree beheld a wood or a farm sacrificed, on the shooting of his branch. At length, nothing of all their feofs and manors remained to them but the estate of Stokeshill. Sir Ralph, the father of John Barnsley's playmate, had scarcely a thousand a year, and several sons to claim a division of the income; till, at last, soon after his attainment of his grandson's majority, the entail was of necessity cut off, the property sold;—and lo! John Barnsley reigned in his stead!

Some people were of opinion that necessity alone urged the son and grandson to the sacrifice; but others imagined that the pride of the Woodgates received a cruel blow in the loss of a contested election for Westerton, experienced, some years before, by Mr. Woodgate. Trusting to the influence which in former times had invariably assigned a seat for the borough to the Stokeshill family, he had stood, and been defeated by Mr. Holloway—a comparatively new man in the county; and though the high tory borough protested that its defection from the ancient banner arose from the leaning of Mr. Woodgate towards Catholic Emancipation,

the persons skilled in human nature and borough nature, were not slow to discover that the corporation could not afford to choose a representative residing in their immediate neighbourhood, having less than two thousand a year. They knew they should feast upon old Holloway's venison, where Woodgate would scarcely have afforded them mutton; and were aware that Holloway's pine apples would be mere pippins at Stokeshill. Nay, Hardingwood Holloway's name was down for an annual subscription to their infirmary of two hundred pounds; when the six goodly heirs of the house of Woodgate mustered between them only 5*l.* 5*s.*

The loss of the election, and the cause of the loss, were alike an offence to the humbled pride of the decayed family; and, as the glory was departed from Stokeshill, the Woodgates saw fit to depart also.

Nothing seemed easier or smoother, to uninterested bystanders, than the mode in which Mr. Barnsley had taken their place, by becoming, by fair and public purchase, proprietor of the estate; yet *he* found plagues and perplexities in his instalment, of which the world knew nothing.

The village of Stokeshill, in former centuries a feof of the house of Woodgate, still retained an indelible impression of its supremacy. The place was full of the fame of their former greatness. The church boasted their sepulchral monuments; the almshouses, the very fount in the market-place, their image and superscription. A hand holding a rose—the Lancasterian badge of old Sir Ranulph de Woodgate—was still the ensign of the little inn; and certain invalided out-pensioned servants of the family, still haunted the spot, preserving in all their vividness, legends and memories of the past. Even the independent farmers of the neighbourhood, whose forefathers had gradually bought off their property from under the crumbling sceptre of the Woodgates, affected to uphold their empire, in opposition to the upstart, their successor. John Barnsley, the quondam attorney, might dine with Lord Shoreham, and shoot with Squire Sullivan; but Giles Hawkins, of Loughlands Marsh, and Dick Abdy, of Woodman's farm, remained true to the rallying cry of 'Woodgate for ever.'

In short, though Barnsley's money had been the means of restoring comfort and respectability to the Woodgate

family, and though he had never interchanged an ungracious word with any member of it in the course of his existence, he found himself detested at Stokeshill, as at once their enemy and an usurper!

The Woodgates were incessantly thrown in his teeth. 'It was not so in the time of the good old family,' was constantly inflicted upon him. All the resistances and redressments suggested by his legal knowledge to the county at large, seemed retaliated upon himself in his own parish. A right of pathway across his lawn, which had been long suffered to fall into disuse, was now insisted upon by every red-hooded dame trudging with her basket of eggs to Westerton market; and to all his concessions and remonstrances, the only answer he could obtain from Hawkins, Abdy, and their confederates, was:

'Yes, Mr. Barnsley, all *that* is very well; but you see, Sir, though the old family mayn't have known as much of *law* as you do, they knew something of justice; and what's more, if they had proved grudgers to the poor, like some people, they wouldn't have been forced to make way at Stokeshill for folk as was never heard of, from Adam, in the county of Kent.'

All this was wormwood to Barnsley. The very name of Woodgate came to be hateful to his ears. If he bought a new horse, a whisper reached him that the Woodgates had a breeding stud of their own. If a new service of plate came down to him from town, what was it to the old family plate of the Woodgates? A beautiful likeness of his daughter was hung up in the drawing-room at Stokeshill; and he was soon afterwards informed by old Mr. Hawkins, that when the family pictures of the Woodgates were sold, previous to the disposal of the property, the Holbeinses had been bought for the gallery at Knowle, and the Vandykes for the King. He could not assume a taste, or affect a possession, but these hateful Woodgates had been beforehand with him!

Such was the motive which induced his earnest desire to become member of parliament for the borough of Westerton. There at least he might rise superior! The last of the Woodgates had been rejected, where the first of the Barnsleys was likely to be joyfully accepted:—it was from him that Stokeshill would derive the honour of being

designated as the seat of the member for Westerton:—the Hand and Flower must for once give place to the Lion's Head. Mighty as was the memory of the Woodgates in the Stokeshill House of Industry, the name of John Barnsley would be greater still in His Majesty's House of Commons. A baronetcy would have been no acquisition to him, their own being three centuries antedated; the urgent point was, to be elected on the very hustings where Richard Woodgate had been lag of the poll!

This devoutly-wished consummation was now at hand. Mr. Holloway's elevation to the peerage, formally announced by the opposition papers, was so gravely contradicted by the tory prints, that it was plain the catastrophe was imminent. October was in progress; November was to behold the meeting and prorogation of parliament; and previous to its re-assembling for business, Hardingwood Holloway would probably become Lord Withamstead, and John Barnsley member for Westerton.

Now, although as self-secure of his seat as if he had been already flogged in from the lobby to half a hundred ministerial divisions, Barnsley judged it expedient that his popularity should be at the brightest at the moment he was elevated on the pedestal of notoriety. His well-known brown mare was accordingly constantly seen in the High-street of Westerton. He suddenly discovered that the bedrooms at Stokeshill required new grates, and bespoke at Timmins's in the Market Place a sufficient supply of pokers and tongs to have formed a charivari; and in spite of Miss Winston's assurances that the linen-presses were overflowing, sent home from the linendraper's a bale or two of handsome damask. Dobbs and Snobbs, the attorneys,—Squills and Catkin, the apothecaries,—Mr. and Mrs. Holdfast, the vicar and vicaress,—nay, even Dumpkins the curate, and Snubbem the schoolmaster, were successively invited to dine at Stokeshill;—poor Barnsley seemed determined to embrace in his hospitalities the vast firm of Westerton and Co.!

Not that there was the slightest surmise of an opposition to his return; but he felt there was something honourable in being cheered into parliament by the acclamations of an admiring borough.

Under these circumstances, Mr. Barnsley could not but

regard Edward Sullivan's proposals for the hand of his daughter, as an untoward event. Oleaginously as he had handled his refusal, the pride of proud Sullivan of Hawkhurst must have been grievously hurt by the rejection of his son. The Sullivans would doubtless refrain from gracing with their presence the ovation of his chairing; and Barnsley almost wished he had not rendered his negative so positive; that he had merely declared his daughter's indifference, and suffered young Sullivan to prosecute his suit, at least till after the election.

But Edward was young and handsome; and the secluded life hitherto led by Margaret might expose her youthful susceptibility to some danger from such a courtship; while the public avowal of his pretensions might perhaps prevent others from aspiring to her hand.

In short, the mischief was done!—Edward was definitively refused, and the gauntlet thrown down to the Sullivans. Barnsley had only to double his assiduities in other quarters; and afford new justification for the title waggishly bestowed upon him by his neighbour Closeman, of 'the busiest B. in the county.'

Meanwhile, the movements of this active domestic machinery were wholly invisible to Margaret. By her father she had never been admitted to the confidence of affectionate intercourse; Stokeshill was as a barren and a dry land, where no love is. As a child, he occasionally questioned her of her studies; as a young woman, escorted her in a daily ride, during which they discoursed of the weather, or the village, and its necessities; but he seemed neither to rejoice in her growing virtues, nor exult in her increasing beauty. There was no tenderness in his nature, either for her or any other human being. His idol was his own prosperity; his occupation, the business by which he fancied it to be secured.

Miss Winston, too, contributed her grain of sand to the aridity of the desert. Having tact enough to perceive that Barnsley would be displeased to find his daughter initiated into the details of his early life, she never spoke to Margaret of her mother. Miss Barnsley knew not whether the opulence surrounding her, descended from her maternal or paternal ancestors; she was, in fact, better acquainted with

the pedigree of the Woodgates, on which her venerable pensioners of the village were constantly enlarging in her presence, than with her own.

Like a flower, flourishing under the influence of the sunshine and the rain, she had grown to womanhood in that bright, pure spirit of unworldliness, so beautiful to the spectator, so perilous to the possessor; and poor Miss Winston, though in her heart keenly alive to the merits of her pupil, did not rise superior to the boarding-school dictum, that too much reserve cannot be kept up between young people and those condemned to be their admonitors. Tenderly as she loved Margaret Barnsley, she would have held it highly blameable to evince any token of sensibility in her favour.

CHAPTER IV.

'Lady Shoreham's invitation-card is come, at last,' observed Margaret to Miss Winston, as they sat at the two extremities of an immense carpet frame, in which they were concocting together, at the price of ten guineas, and half a year's leisure, a library-chair cover.

'Indeed!—Where is it?'—said the governess, with more curiosity than she was wont to display on such subjects.

'John brought it to papa as we were walking together in the shrubbery after breakfast. I dare say he put it in his pocket with the letters he was reading.'

'And how was the invitation worded?' inquired Miss Winston, a little anxious concerning the position she was to hold between the country neighbours and her pupil on the entrance of the latter into society; whether to be invited out as companion, or left at home as superannuated governess.

'Very strangely, I assure you,' replied the unsuspecting Margaret. 'It was a printed card.—"Lady Shoreham At Home, on Wednesday the 22nd of October; Morning, Noon and Night."—Papa tells me there is to be a breakfast at twelve o'clock; after which, the villagers will be feasted in tents in the park, which, if the weather is favourable, we are to walk out and see. At six, a grand dinner; and immediately afterwards, a ball for the tenants in the hall, and another for the guests in the painted ball-room.'

'What an effort—what an expense!' ejaculated Miss Winston. 'How terribly fatigued you will all be!'

'*You?*—Shall you not accompany me, then?'

'I am not aware of being invited.'

'Oh, yes! there was a separate card for yourself. Papa was so full of business that he did not give the subject much attention, but put your invitation into his pocket with the other. You will go, will you not?'

'I shall consult Mr. Barnsley's wishes on the subject,' replied Miss Winston, primly. 'If he considers it desirable for me to attend you, I shall obey him.'

'Oh, indeed I could not think of going without you!' cried Margaret, trembling at the anticipation of such an enterprise. 'Papa, who has always so much business to talk of with Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Holloway, and the rest of them, would perhaps leave me quite alone; or, worse still, give me in charge to Lady Shoreham, of whom I am so horribly afraid!'

'But it is time, my dear Miss Barnsley, you should get over these childish apprehensions.'

'Don't call me Miss Barnsley, or I shall feel that I have displeased you. Call me Margery, as you used when I was a little girl, and you were satisfied with my sampler; and then I will try to acquire more confidence.'

'How often must I remind you not to express yourself in such vulgar abbreviations as "don't," and "shan't?"' said Miss Winston, coldly. 'It is a most unlady-like habit.'

'Well *do not* look so much displeased, and you *shall not* have cause to remind me of your prohibition,' said Margaret, smiling. 'But to return to Lady Shoreham.'

'To return to Lady Shoreham,—be assured she will have too much on her hands on so eventful a day as the 22nd, to trouble you with her solicitudes.'

'An additional reason that you should not refuse to accompany me.'

'My dear, I do *not* refuse; I shall abide by Mr. Barnsley's decision.'

'I wonder,' said Margaret, after a short pause, 'whether Helen Sullivan and her mother will return from St. Leonard's in time for this fête at the Abbey?'

'Indeed, I cannot say.'

'I have been thinking, that very likely this foolish business about Edward may render them less cordial to me than they used to be,' continued Margaret, blushing deeply. 'I am very fond of Mrs. Sullivan and Helen. Of all our neighbours they are the only ones who have shown me more than formal kindness; and I own I looked forward to their protection, on my first coming out. But all that, I fear, is over.'

'Mrs. Sullivan has a sort of cajoling Irish manner, which strikes me as unnatural,' said Miss Winston, stiffly. 'With several children of her own, she cannot be so much interested about those of other people.'

'She has known me from my birth,' pleaded Margaret. 'The first pleasure I can bring to mind, was going with Nurse Molyneux to spend a few days at Hawkhurst.'

'Yes, I am aware that the projects of the family date from a remote epoch; but as Mr. Barnsley justly observes, he is entitled to expect a better match for his heiress than a younger son.'

'Am I an heiress?'—demanded Margaret, with wondering eyes.

'Mr. Barnsley has a fine fortune, and you are his only child.'

'You mean, then, that I shall be an heiress after my father's death?—But the Sullivans cannot have been so base as to calculate upon that!' cried Margaret with a look of horror.

'Did they ever promote an intimacy between you and Mr. Sullivan Brereton, who has inherited Lord Brereton's Irish property?'

'Never,—which is a strong proof in their favour. Everybody admits that Edward Sullivan is twice as good looking and agreeable as his elder brother.'

Miss Winston could not forbear smiling.

'I understand very little of such matters,' resumed Margaret, provoked by her smile; 'but I shall be greatly grieved if this unlucky business produce any coolness between the families.'

'My dear! have you got the blue worsted?—that is the green you are giving me.'

'I wonder whether Lord Shoreham is arrived yet at Wynnex Abbey,' said Margaret, rectifying her mistake.

'I really cannot say.—Where are the scissors?'

'I think he would have called on my father. You know papa is a sort of guardian to Lord Shoreham.'

'No, my dear,—only an executor to the late Viscount,' observed Miss Winston, unwilling to neglect an opportunity of setting right her pupil. 'Lady Shoreham was left sole guardian to her children.'

'Lord Shoreham was probably of opinion that she would be a better judge of the education to be bestowed on a person of his son's rank in life, than my father or Mr. Holloway, who do not live in what is called the great world.'

'Luckily for them!' responded Miss W. with sententious solemnity.

'Her views would certainly never have coincided with theirs; for from the period of Lord Shoreham's death till lately, she has not spent a single week at Wynnex Abbey!'

'Lady Shoreham is fond of London and the continent,' said Miss Winston, 'and knew the management of the estate to be in good hands.'

'The executorship has given my father a great deal of trouble; but still I think he likes it,' observed Margaret. 'Since Lady Shoreham has been in the county, new furnishing and making gardens and conservatories at Wynnex, it often strikes me that he feels her to be exceeding her privilege.'

'And so I fancy she is. Lady Shoreham has no power except over her jointure and the allowance for the education of her children. Still I can understand that so near the young Viscount's attainment of his majority, your father may not choose to oppose her.'

'Why not?—Lord Shoreham has not been at Wynnex since he left school. He was quite a boy when he was here last. He cannot have given orders for all these improvements, and may disapprove what she has been doing.'

'You speak, my dear, as if you resented it yourself.'

'I repeat what my father observed as we were returning the other day from Wynnex.'

'Have a care, Margaret, how you repeat it to any one but me. It is reported at Westerton, that your father has nothing so much at heart as to see you settled at the Abbey.'

'How absurd!' exclaimed Margaret, much amused. '*I* settled at Wynnex—*I* a great lady—*I* a viscountess!—I,

who scarcely dare look Lady Shoreham in the face! Consider, for a moment, how much I am beneath them; and what misery is said to spring from unequal marriages!'

'I was not advocating the wisdom of such an alliance, but simply telling you what is said in Westerton on the subject.'

'The people at Westerton seem to trouble themselves very unnecessarily about our affairs. But, good gracious!' cried Margaret, interrupting herself, and glancing at the window, 'here is Lady Shoreham's pony phaeton, and a party on horseback!'

'Quick! ring the bell, my dear, and order a fire in the drawing-room!' cried Miss Winston. And in accordance with the governess's notions of politeness, the visitors were ushered into a room from which a red-armed housemaid escaped, with her tinder-box in her hand, in an opposite direction, while puffs of smoke circled through its damp uninhabited atmosphere, instead of being received in the warm, snug, comfortable study, which Miss Winston held to be unpardonably littered by her pupil's books and work-boxes.

'I learn, with regret, that your father is not at home, my dear Miss Barnsley,' said Lady Shoreham, extending her hand kindly to the blushing Margaret.

'My father is at Westerton; this is the day of the justice meeting,' replied Margaret, receiving with a sense of diffidence, almost amounting to pain, the greeting of Miss Drewe and her sister; and the profound, but supercilious bow of a young gentleman by whom they were accompanied, and whom in her panic she took to be Lord Shoreham.

'True, I ought to have remembered it. My residence abroad has rendered me shamefully forgetful of good old Kentish customs. On the present occasion, I am a sufferer by my ignorance; I wished to ask Mr. Barnsley's sanction to running away with you for the week of our entertainments at Wynnex. I grieve that I am unable to offer beds to the whole party; but it will be easy for Mr. Barnsley and your friend Miss Winston to join you at the Abbey on the 22nd.'

'You are extremely kind; I will speak to papa,' said Margaret, to whom these civilities were as agreeable as a committal to Westerton gaol.

'I am sure, my dear, your papa will feel honoured in

accepting her ladyship's invitation for you,' interposed Miss Winston, desirous not to appear affronted.

'In that case, I will beg you to inform Mr. Barnsley,' continued Lady Shoreham, addressing the governess, 'that I will drive over to fetch Miss Barnsley on Saturday next—and that, as the London solicitors will be at Wynnex on the twenty-first, for a general discharge of the minority accounts, I shall hope for the pleasure of his company at dinner on that day.'

Margaret replied by a silent but smiling bow; pre-occupied by her misgivings as to whether time had been allowed for the servants to place in the dining-room the luncheon ordered by Miss Winston.

An awkward pause ensued, in consequence of her cogitations, which brought under general attention the conversation between Lucilla Drewe and her brother, to whom she was pointing out the view from the drawing-room windows.

'Yes, great capabilities!' was the reply of the young lord; 'if the place were mine, I should cut down the hanger yonder, which obstructs a fine sweep of landscape towards Hawkhurst; and take down a portion of the village to the west, which seems placed there purposely to shut out the river.'

'But Stokeshill Church?'

'Move it!—there is a much better situation for a church just above the market-place.'

'Move it, is easily said by a person of your enterprising spirit. But that fine old gothic tower!'

'The truth is,' resumed the young gentleman, replying to himself rather than to his interlocutor, 'this old place of the Woodgates has just the character of all English seats built in that unsocial spirit of aristocraticism, which plants out and walls out the vulgar, at the risk of choke damp and loss of prospect. Your true great British privacy consists in a park fenced round with woods and plantations that resemble the jungles of Sierra Leone!—But then, the grand object is attained!—Stage-coach passengers on the high road cannot discern so much as the chimney tops!'

'We are, I admit, apt to be over-planted,' observed Lady Shoreham; 'yet unluckily, the landscape gardeners who sixty years ago undertook to replace by pert plantations the

decaying oaks of our great grandfathers, made war upon the finest features of our parks, their noble avenues. In the time of Lord Shoreham's father, there were four splendid avenues at Wynnex leading to the four lodges,—called the spring, the summer, the autumn, and the winter walks, that is,—avenues of lime, chestnut, beech, and oak; but they were swept away by Repton.'

'I should think they must have given rather a formal appearance to the park,' observed Margaret in a half hesitating tone.

'Just the look of the turnpike roads in France, where one finds avenues intersecting each other in all directions,' sneered the young gentleman. 'The landscape gardeners of England act on a radically erroneous system. They say of a gentleman's park, as people who know nothing of the drama, say of the stage—"Consult nature; above all things, consult nature; the nearer you approach nature, the greater your perfection!"—a capital error—a fundamental blunder! —The stage is not nature—*cannot* be nature!—at the utmost, you can but render it the highest order of art. Just so with parks and gardens. They form at best a puerile imitation of natural landscape; the point is to create a new order of things by the foreign aid of ornament, through a concentration of curious trees, shrubs, flowers, rocks and waters, such as nature cannot afford to lavish on a single spot. Look at Versailles, Isola-Bella, or the villas of Rome, and compare their gardens with the pincushion lawns, serpentine walks, and a duck pond with weeping-willows, which disgrace our national taste on the continent under the name of English gardens.'

'Shocking, indeed!' echoed Lucilla. 'What Chinese bridges and Russian Kiosks one is required to admire at Chantilly, the little Trianon, and hundreds of German palaces under the name of "Jardins Anglais."'

'The style is totally inapplicable to palaces. There is something much more imposing in the grand designs of Le Nôtre,' observed Lady Shoreham.

And Margaret profited by the ensuing pause to invite the party to luncheon. But it appeared they were to lunch with the Sullivans, the young people having promised to ride round by Hawkhurst. At the name of Sullivan, poor

Margaret Barnsley's confusion increased so much, that she could not fully understand Lady Shoreham's remark, as she rose to take leave.

'My son will not be with us before the 16th or 17th. Shoreham is shooting with his friend Lord Buckhurst, at the Duke of Grantville's, in Norfolk; but pray tell Mr. Barnsley that he will certainly be at Wynnex by the beginning of the week after next.'

'And who, then, was that tall, prosy, contemptuous young man?' inquired Margaret of Miss Winston, after listening patiently to a rebuke full ten minutes long upon her disrespectful familiarity with the Viscountess, and general disregard of etiquette; 'I took him at the time for Lord Shoreham.'

'Because, my dear, your heedlessness prevents you from hearing or seeing half that is passing around you.'

'Not my heedlessness,—my *shyness*. I have lived so little in company—I cannot accustom myself at once to so many strangers.'

'It needed no great exercise of courage to listen when Lady Shoreham named that gentleman to you, when you entered the room, as Mr. Sullivan Brereton.'

'Brereton?—Edward's brother?—Good gracious, how unlike!—I never should have guessed it!' cried Margaret.

'Mr. Brereton has had greater advantages; has been abroad, has mixed more in the world.'

'Advantages!—yet so inferior to his brother!'

'He appears well-informed, and entertains more decided opinions.'

'But how different from the diffident, kind, courteous manners of Edward Sullivan!'

'I am sorry, my dear Margaret, after Mr. Barnsley's unqualified rejection of that young man, to see you thus avowedly prejudiced in his favour,' said Miss Winston.

'Indeed I am not prejudiced. I was speaking rather to the discredit of Mr. Brereton, than to the credit of Edward.'

'My dear, I have told you before, that it is highly indecorous on the part of a young lady of your age to call a young man by his christian name. Let me never again hear you talk of "Edward."'

'It is so difficult to get over habits contracted from child-

hood!—I should as soon think of calling Helen "Miss Sullivan."'

'I suspect you will soon find it advisable!' observed Miss Winston, leading the way back into their warm sociable room. 'Unless I am much mistaken, the affair of yesterday will create a total estrangement between the two families.'

CHAPTER V.

Lady Shoreham was a woman unexceptionable in conduct, character, and manners, as regards the superficial moralities of life. She had been a respectful daughter to reckless parents; a deferential wife to a husband who valued her less than the least valuable drawer of his cabinet of medals; and was now a devoted mother to the three children he had bequeathed to her guardianship.

But, as there exist certain infatuations known by the names of egotism, favouritism, nepotism, Lady Shoreham was the slave of an *engouement* which, for want of a better name, must be termed familyism.

Till the period of her marriage, her brothers and sisters represented in her eyes a privileged race, to whom the interests of the whole world were to be sacrificed; but from the moment of becoming a mother, this idolatry was transferred to her children. She held their finger-aches to exceed in importance the plagues and pestilences depopulating a province; and a whole navy might sink unheeded, so that the pleasure-boat of the young viscount floated in smooth water. The weakness was as little unamiable as any weakness can be that implies indifference towards the sufferings of mankind; for she gave up her time and thoughts to the advantage of her offspring, and would have considered her own misery and that of the whole human race, as unworthy to be weighed against a flood of tears from the eyes of any member of her beloved family.

Yet, on points unconnected with this besetting weakness, Lady Shoreham was a woman of tolerable judgment. Where those three idolized beings did not intervene, she could see with a penetrating eye, and even feel with a kindly heart;

though where Lord Shoreham and his sisters were concerned, she became the puppet of her ramifying selfishness.

This foolish partiality produced a two-fold evil, by rendering a pleasant woman at times a very disagreeable companion, and by misleading the young people as to their own consequence. The boy viscount had made his appearance at Eton, puffed up with maternal inflation; and the six months' buffeting and mockery by which the mistake had been cudgelled out of him, was a sufficiently severe school; but the two girls, who knew nothing of the world, either through the microcosm of a public school or the magnifying glass of society, had still their lesson to learn.

This habit of considering everything and everybody with reference to the family of Shoreham, inclined the widowed viscountess strongly in favour of Barnsley and his daughter. Too well born and too well bred to be a searcher out of other people's pedigrees—unless when involving a connection with herself—the vague announcement made by Lord Shoreham, on their first visit to Wynnex Abbey, after Barnsley's instalment at Stokeshill, that 'their new neighbour was an intelligent young man, bred to the law, but too independent to pursue it as a profession,' comprised all she wished to know on the subject. In the course of a few months, Barnsley acquired some interest in her eyes by the loss of his pretty, timid, unoffending wife; and though the ladies of Westerton and its vicinity were disappointed at the readiness with which the widower surmounted his affliction, and the contrast afforded by his bright countenance and fussy activity to the despondencies becoming his interesting position, the viscountess was content to be secured from the *gêne* of a mourning visitor, more especially as Lord Shoreham, a man of science and letters, found his account in the professional experience of Stokeshill. Barnsley proved a proficient in the only branch of knowledge in which his lordship was an ignoramus; and when it appeared that the new comer was quite as eager to assist in the despatch of the viscount's business as the viscount to let it remain undespatched, a league of amity, grounded on reciprocity of service, was speedily established between them. The friendship of Lord Shoreham afforded to Mr. Barnsley a footing in the county; while the zeal of Mr. Barnsley in

the management of Lord Shoreham's affairs, afforded leisure to the erudite peer to inflict upon the Antiquarian Society a treatise on the Round Towers of Ireland, besides three long-winded inaugural chapters of a projected history of the county of Kent.

But within ten years of the formation of this auspicious alliance. the worthy viscount was done to death by the discovery of a tesselated pavement at a remote part of the park at Wynnex Abbey. Between the excitement caused by surmises as to its origin as a Roman villa, bath, or bake-house, and the cold caught in groping, day after day, in the rainy month of November, into the excavations, his lordship drew his last breath—a martyr to antiquarianism and a pleurisy: and Lady Shoreham's first moment of satisfaction, after so startling an event, occurred when, on opening the viscount's will, it came to light that he had appointed as executors his neighbours Barnsley and Holloway, instead of his two brothers, Alfred and Augustus Drewe, who were the objects of her especial aversion. She knew Mr. Barnsley to be a friendly, prudent man, likely to do justice to the interests of her children; and as Mr. Holloway, with a world of business of his own, had at once delegated to his colleague the active executorship, she trusted she could meet with little opposition to her plans and projects.

Any other executor, she was certain, would urge upon her the propriety of passing a considerable portion of her time at Wynnex. Now she happened to detest Wynnex. The place was dull, damp, and destitute of the sort of neighbourhood indispensable to her notions of society. The damp had killed her husband and disagreed with her children; and the dulness and want of neighbourhood would be fatal to herself. Against the Abbey, therefore, she set her face, even while enveloped in all the solemnity of her widow's cap. And her conviction that the zealous executor would be content to concentrate in his own person the representation of the family, and officiate as a sort of vice-vicecomes at Wynnex Abbey, satisfied her that she should meet with no obstacle from Barnsley.

Time confirmed her expectations. While Lady Shoreham was consulting the whims and fancies of her offspring, by excursions to foreign countries or English watering-places,

Barnsley reigned supreme at Wynnex. He had the ordering of the whole estate, the shooting of all the game, the disposing of all the patronage; and, to do him justice, had never in the smallest degree abused his trust. Barnsley was a man of strict integrity. He dealt with the property of the Shoreham family as if it had been his own—in the figurative, and not in the literal sense of the term. And though murmurs and complaints occasionally reached the ear of the noble widow, which the murmurers and complainers knew not she was without legal power to redress, it invariably proved that the exactions and oppressions complained of had been imposed in the interest of the young viscount, never in that of his representative. The head keeper and head gardener hinted that Barnsley was no gentleman; that he had sold off the deer, and would not suffer the succession houses to be kept up during the young lord's minority and her ladyship's absence from England; but they could not say that so much as a partridge or a pumpkin ever found its way from Wynnex to Stokeshill Place. When occasionally Margaret rode over with her father, and amused herself during his interview with the steward in the gardens or greenhouses, it was noticed that, though the rarest exotics might be blooming there unheeded, and Margaret was known to be a devoted floriculturist, not so much as a blossom had she ever made her own.

This disinterestedness, which Lady Shoreham knew how to appreciate, rendered Barnsley an object of only greater dislike to the menials, who would have been glad to find, in the executor's encroachments, a plea for their peculations; nay, even the Holloways, whose estates adjoined those of the minor, were of opinion that Barnsley showed himself too indifferent to the preservation of the game on the estate. What was the expense of two or three keepers, more or less, in the general accounts? And though Barnsley, in according leave to shoot to the more respectable neighbours, gave it under certain restrictions, on the ground that he wished the preserves to remain in such a condition that three years' strict preserving, previously to Lord Shoreham's coming of age, might give him the best shooting in the county, many were rebellious, and all ungrateful.

But the manifest probity of the trustee was not without its reward. That which he loved best in the world—unpro-

fitable business—poured in upon him from every quarter. He was solicited to become trustee to all the world. Public charities, private settlements, minors, widows, bankrupts, all were desirous to secure so excellent an operative, and so safe a depositary; and Barnsley, without a moment he could call his own, became the happiest of mankind!

That the claims of his own daughter and estate should be neglected under such exigencies, is not surprising. Nay, to so vigorous an extent did he carry his sense of duty, as a man of business, that when eligible opportunities of investment presented themselves, he profited by them for his wards before he thought of himself.

On one occasion, certain lands had fallen into the market in consequence of the bankruptcy of a certain tradesman at Westerton, which Barnsley immediately proposed as a purchase to his co-trustees under the marriage settlement of old Holloway's eldest daughter, whose estate adjoined the property; though he had private intimation of a line of canal projected through the property, which would fifty-fold increase its value. If he possessed the bustling, tenacious, pragmatical spirit of attorneyship, he was free from the pettifogging rapacity included in the assessed catalogue of sins supposed to form an appendix to the Rolls.

Barnsley might, perhaps, have experienced some regret that the period of his grander stewardship was nearly expired, had he not felt certain that a young man so fond of London and Paris as Lord Shoreham, would not cease to be dependent on his aid after attaining his majority. Nothing could be more evident than that he inherited his lady mother's detestation of Wynnex Abbey; for immediately after leaving Oxford he had set off for Naples, and since his return had never set foot on the estate. Barnsley was unacquainted with him, except as the formal boy of fifteen, who, accompanied by his German tutor, had twice spent a few days of his holidays at the Abbey. But even should Lord Shoreham take it into his head to reside there, his inexperience must naturally turn to his judicious neighbour for counsel and support; and Barnsley felt that it would be only having the noble proprietor of Wynnex in leading-strings, instead of the three hundred tenants, labourers, and domestics, hitherto submitted to his government.

This vision of power had, however, been in some degree dissipated, by Lady Shoreham's arrival at Wynnex, with her two daughters, at the close of the London season, and her assumption of authority in ordering repairs, furniture, and improvements, to be defrayed by her son on his approaching accession to independence. Barnsley was startled and displeased; but he felt that interference would be alike useless and productive of coolness between the families. Though too firmly established in county consideration, by his habits of usefulness and conscientious integrity, to need the support of a young man of Lord Shoreham's age, it was essential to his comfort and respectability that no breach should separate him from those with whom he had been so publicly connected; more especially as it certainly *had* glanced into his mind that a marriage between the viscount and his pretty, pleasing Margaret was by no means an improbable event.

It was not his wish to accomplish such a connection by any unhandsome manœuvres: he had no leisure for plots; he was too busy with other people's business to have conspired on his own account for a kingly crown! But in the common course of things, without interfering with his justice business, his trusteeships, or his progress into parliament, Margaret's soft grey eyes might reach the accessible heart of a viscount of one-and-twenty. At so early an age, Lord Shoreham would of course be considerably under his mother's control; and Lady Shoreham's friendly familiarity left no room to doubt that she would give her utmost sanction to a match by which the Stokeshill estates might be eventually incorporated by a ring fence into those of Wynnex, and settle her only son in sober wedlock, at a period when so much is to be dreaded from the indiscretions of youth and inexperience.

Not that Mr. Barnsley had any personal cause to join in the cry against the dissipations and immoralities of the age. Of London life he knew only as much as was to be learned by an occasional week spent at the Hummums, enlivened by visits to the various law courts, a dinner in Great George Street, Westminster, with his friend Holloway, from which he adjourned to the gallery of the House of Commons; or, as the utmost extent of dissipation, a friendly dinner at the

Piazza with his stock-broker, and a sally, at half-price, to one of the theatres. But, in point of acquaintanceship, Barnsley might fairly have substituted the word 'business friends,' for 'bosom friends;' and even in the utmost expansion arising from a bottle of claret, his talk was of bonds, deeds, stocks, and securities. With him parchment was the be-all and the end-all of social life.

Nor had even his partial authority in the guardianship of a viscount, heir to twenty thousand a year, achieved his enlightenment. He had heard remote rumours of wars, or still worse, rumours of peace, between the old Jewry and the juvenile aristocracy; of the perils of gambling-houses and gambling clubs, jockeyship and Newmarket, ballet nymphs and actresses. But Barnsley was inclined to believe that scandal and the Sunday newspapers were under a mistake. No such aberrations of intellect or immorality had been brought under his personal observation. So far, indeed, was Lord Shoreham from giving him grounds of uneasiness on the financial score, that the allowance of three thousand a year allotted to the viscountess for his maintenance by his father's will, had never been exceeded. The young man was evidently a steady, regular young man. Mr. Barnsley only hoped that his two paternal uncles, the Honourable Augustus and the Honourable Alfred Drewe—so pointedly excluded by the late lord from any share in the administration of his affairs—might not, at some future time, obtain an influence over the uncorrupted mind of their nephew.

'Very kind—very considerate of Lady Shoreham,' observed Barnsley, on learning on his return home to a late dinner, the invitation given by the viscountess to his daughter. 'You accepted, my dear, of course?'

'Miss Barnsley waited, Sir, for your authorization. I promised her ladyship to mention the subject to you,' observed Miss Winston.

'A very unnecessary formality,' replied Barnsley, who had about as much regard for the feelings of his daughter's governess as for those of his elbow chair. 'For the future, Margaret, whatever invitations are given you by Lady Shoreham are to be accepted unconditionally. Lady Shoreham is a person of too high a position in society to suggest anything unbecoming. Be ready to wait upon her ladyship when she

calls for you on Saturday; which arrangement,' he continued, turning carelessly to Miss Winston, 'will save you all trouble about this fête at Wynnex.'

Margaret trembled with consternation at the idea of confronting, without her governess's protection and prompterships, so terrible a tribunal; while the governess struggled with unshed tears to think how little regard twelve years' unremitting devotion had earned for her from her pupil's father. Custom, however, rendered her callous to the rubs of life: she had been so long occupied in inspiring Margaret with the conviction that her father's decrees were immutable, as at last to have become persuaded of it herself.

'Mr. Sullivan Brereton, Sir, accompanied Lady Shoreham and her family this morning,' said she, by way of diverting Barnsley's and Margaret's notice from her momentary emotion.

'Mr. Sullivan Brereton?—I hope, Margaret, you were particularly civil to him?'

'I did not sit near him, papa. Indeed, I was not aware that you wished me to show much attention to any of the Sullivans.'

'Just now, my dear—after a step they may resent as an offence. I have no wish to quarrel with Sullivan or his family, because I do not give my daughter to his younger son.'

'I am sure, papa, you would never have given her to his elder!' said Margaret, cheered by this unexpected announcement.—'A most disagreeable person, Mr. Brereton.'

'He inherits the fine Irish property of Mrs. Sullivan's brother, Lord Brereton,' observed Barnsley, who estimated a man's merits as others would his income-tax. 'Young Brereton has between eight and ten thousand a year;—very different circumstances from Edward's modest position! From something that fell from Lady Shoreham the other day, I should not be surprised if he were to marry Miss Lucilla Drewe.'

'Lord Brereton's property does not lie in Kent, I fancy?' demanded Margaret.

'No, in Ireland, in the county of Cork. A charming estate!—all the advantages of lying near a sea-port town, and the land worth a hundred and ten pounds an acre!'—

cried Barnsley, gratified to hear his daughter express for the first time an interest in the nature of property.

'I was not thinking of *that*,' replied Margaret, unsuspectingly; 'I was only hoping, that if he married Miss Drewe, there would be no occasion for them to settle in this neighbourhood. He seems so very self-sufficient and disagreeable!'

CHAPTER VI.

Saturday the 15th arrived, and with it Lady Shoreham in her pony phaeton; and poor Margaret found that, in spite of her secret hopes for some interdicting catastrophe, some cold or sore throat, her visit to Wynnex Abbey was ordained. She had refrained from expressing to their full extent, in Miss Winston's presence, her apprehensions and misgivings; having perceived from the first, that neither her father nor Lady Shoreham were desirous her governess should bear her company. She felt it her duty to imitate the forbearance with which that humble woman acquiesced in their decree.

'For the dressing-box I fancy I can find room,' observed Lady Shoreham, when she found Miss Barnsley followed to the hall door by two servants bearing a dressing-box and trunk; 'but I fear, my dear, I must trouble you to send over the rest of your belongings with your maid.'

And Miss Winston, who had expected that the solemn ceremony of 'fetching' was to be performed in the family coach, luckily overheard the injunction in time to order out the Stokeshill carriage, and take care that Gladstone, her pupil's attendant, should be in readiness at Wynnex to receive her. Though mortified at heart, she was eager that Margaret should do honour to her instructions on this her first introduction to the county; and next to the excitement of proceeding herself to the Abbey, enjoyed that of preparing Miss Barnsley for so great an occasion.

'You will find us quite alone,' observed Lady Shoreham, when Margaret, her cheeks flushed by agitation, was seated by her side in the phaeton. 'My son and his young friends will not be with us till Wednesday. My brother, Lord Tynemouth, and his family reach us the day after; and the Holloways and Sullivans come on the 21st. We have no one

but Mr. Brereton and my nephew Sir Ross Carmichael, who are riding this morning with Mademoiselle Mennequin and the girls, to look at the ruins of Roding Castle.'

But the two strangers thus constituting 'nobody' were quite enough to overawe the inexperienced Margaret Barnsley; she felt that her pains and penalties were beginning. Accustomed for so many years to visit the Abbey almost as its mistress, she could scarcely understand the change which caused her heart to beat so painfully as they drove up to the door; where, instead of the slipshod housemaid or superannuated porter by whom, twelve months before, a ring at the hall had been answered, two servants in livery and two out, hurried forth to receive their lady.

'You will, I trust, my dear Miss Barnsley, make yourself quite at home,' said Lady Shoreham, after having claimed her approval for the new conservatory and newly-furnished library, saloon, and morning room. 'Lucilla and Mary will be here immediately to do the honours of the young ladies' book-room to you, and show you your own; till when, as I have letters to finish for the post, I must leave you. By the way, a box of new books came down from town, last night; —here they are, in the rack.'

And rolling her furred phaeton-cloak around her, Lady Shoreham glided out of the library; leaving Margaret alone in a world almost as new to her, as if she had dropped from a balloon into the territory of the king of Ava.

The apartment in which she was now installed, in a luxurious lounging chair, with a collection of the last new poems, novels, and periodicals by her side, had been completely metamorphosed since Margaret was accustomed to take refuge there from a passing shower. Stokeshill was handsomely and conveniently furnished; but with no such excess as to prepare her for the whimsical and voluptuous magnificence recently displayed at the Abbey. Every new-fangled invention of the virtù-mongers of Paris and London was there to be found.

The late Lord Shoreham's collections, long carefully encased, were displayed to advantage in glazed cabinets of carved ebony, fitted into the retiring windows of the library; while new writing-tables and writing-chairs—reading-tables and reading-chairs—desks, divans, ottomans, and the luxu-

ries of a literary ease that resembles literary study much as an Arabian does a dray-horse, served to fill up the capacious chamber. Corinthian bronzes, Etruscan vases, and Egyptian reliques, were crowded together in what appeared to Margaret most unclassical confusion; and after gazing on them till her eyes were weary, and finding, from the lugubrious telling of a Gothic bronze clock representing the cathedral at Rheims, that it was only four o'clock, she took an unbound book from the rack, and throwing herself back in her chair, opened the only volume of the collection to which Miss Winston's prohibitions did not seem to extend. Novels, romances, or modern poetry, were sealed fountains; but there seemed no possible objection to Blackwood's Magazine,—of which, the first article was headed 'Prison Discipline,' and the second 'Parliamentary Reform.'

It was in vain, however, that Margaret's patience strove to attach itself to a trite political pamphlet. Listlessly turning over the leaves, she commenced an article, which the name of a female writer announced as unexceptionable. Her attention was soon attracted,—soon engrossed; for the story was one of innocent and unhappy love, of which the pathos and interest were irresistible. Margaret's colour went and came as she read on. Her heart beat tumultuously; the tears started to her eyes:—her whole nature was under the influence of a spell of exquisite enchantment. Her strong natural sensibility was, for the first time, initiated into the mazes of fictitious woe, by the description of a mother hanging over the death-bed of an only daughter—a being young and beautiful, who, like the maid of Desdemona's mother, had loved, and been forsaken.

Overpowered by emotion, Margaret paused and gasped for breath. She had not dreamed that there were such afflictions in the world. She had hitherto heard neither the voice of passion nor the voice of mockery. The tale which, like the 'dying fall' of Count Orsino's music, came to this mournful and tender close, seemed to have opened a new frame of the universe to her contemplation; and the tears came streaming down her cheeks, till her silken ringlets lay uncurled by their moisture. The instincts of her soul were awakened, like the conscience of the murderous Thane, to 'sleep no more!'

From the reverie thus excited, she was disturbed by the

sound of approaching footsteps; and as she looked up from the book that lay half closed upon her knee, it must be owned the moment would have been propitious for Edward Sullivan to have presented himself before her. But unluckily, the intruder who stood staring with amazement at her swollen eyes, presented the very antipodes of that which ladies love to look on. Tall, awkward, the sinister expression of a naturally disagreeable countenance rendered still more forbidding by the rough masses of his dark hair, Margaret had scarcely time to wonder who he was or whence he came; for, after an exclamation of 'I beg your pardon—I understood Lady Shoreham was here,' the stranger hurried out of the library.

With the same erroneous precipitation that Miss Barnsley had decided Brereton to be Lord Shoreham, she now settled the intruder to be Lord Shoreham's cousin, Sir Ross Carmichael. But she thought no further of him. The spell in which she sat entranced had been suspended but not broken. Margaret was still sorrowing over the fate of the gentle victim, who had followed up the gift of her affections with the sacrifice of her life; for her unsullied mind had not been steeled by running the gauntlet of a circulating library, to that unfeminine mood of philosophy which enables the fine lady to idle over the 'Bride of Lammermoor' while her hair is dressing for a ball; then rush, without a tear, into the vortex of fashion and frivolity.—It was a terrible trial to her when, at last, the sound of cheerful voices in the hall compelled her to lay aside the breviary of her new religion, and rise from her seat to welcome and be welcomed by Lady Shoreham's daughters, returning in high spirits from their morning's ride.

The Drewes were tall, handsome, high-bred girls, with no worse disqualification than the selfishness into which their excellent disposition had been cramped by the fond indulgence of their mother. All without was bright and polished,—all within hollow and unprofitable. But the magnitude of their faults secured them from lesser failings. Their self-sufficiency rendered them superior to the paltry jealousy of Margaret Barnsley's attractions. Rivalship with such a person was out of the question; and instead of treating her want of connection with the scorn it would have provoked

from some country baronet's daughter, they were fascinated by her unassuming gentleness, and amused by her *naïveté*.

This favourable judgment was fully confirmed in the course of the three first days passed by Margaret at the Abbey. Inexperienced in the magic of operas and concerts, she was enchanted by the perfection of their musical accomplishments; and after being introduced to their easels and embroidery frames, their Spanish, German, and Italian libraries, the poor girl shrank from the contemplation of her comparative incapacity. She allowed nothing for difference of tuition. She only felt that she was a dunce.

In this contempt of herself it must be owned that Margaret was admirably seconded by the two gentlemen making up their party at Wynnex.

Sir Ross Carmichael, a raw young Irish baronet, the son of one of the late Lord Shoreham's sisters, having understood that the quiet-spoken young lady in the white muslin dress was nothing more than the daughter of the family man of business, looked down upon her from the highest pinnacle of his Milesian arrogance; while Brereton, despising the whole world as compared with himself, despised Miss Barnsley of Stokeshill, as compared with the whole world. The poor girl was, however, too well convinced of her own insignificance to fancy herself ill-used; and when (Lady Shoreham having retired to her especial corner of the library to pass the evening writing letters) Mademoiselle Mennequin, the French governess, posted herself beside the young visitor to honour her with the inquiries usually made by governesses of young ladies—'Do you play—do you sing—do you draw—are you fond of history—how many hours a day do you devote to your music?' and ended by inviting her to a game of chess, Margaret thought herself distinguished by especial kindness. She knew not that in such houses as Wynnex, it is part of the ignominious vocation of the governess to entertain such of the visitors as are thought too stupid for the rest.

Among the things that puzzled her most in the course of her first week at the Abbey, was her own previous insensibility to the importance of Lord Shoreham. It had never entered her head to conjecture whether he were tall or short, amiable or unamiable; but now, the consequence she saw assigned to his most trifling inclinations by his mother and

sisters, convinced her that he must be a highly interesting personage. Everything, and everybody, at Wynnex was referred to his oracular judgment.

'I am not fond of yellow, though it is certainly the best candle-light colour,' observed Lady Shoreham; 'but I chose yellow hangings for the saloon, because Shoreham thinks it becoming.'

'Do not let any more figs be served,' said she, another day, to the *maître d'hôtel*, when the dessert was put on the table; 'Lord Shoreham is particularly fond of ripe figs; and I fear there will not be enough to last out the season.'

The servants were, of course, still more servile. Twenty times a-day, Margaret overheard one or other of them expressing his terrors to his lady, lest the workmen should not have finished their operations before my lord came down; that the new cooks would not have arrived before my lord came down; that certain missing cases of still Sillery champagne would not make their appearance before my lord came down; that the off-wheeler of her ladyship's set of greys would not get over its lameness before my lord came down. 'My lord' was the object of their hourly and half-hourly solicitude!

Margaret could not help feeling that so much cost and care, bestowed on a lad of one-and-twenty, was a work of supererogation. She had witnessed, at Hawkhurst, the indifference experienced by Edward Sullivan who was two years older; and the young Viscount could not be more deserving attention than poor Edward. His sisters, indeed, often adverted to his attractions, and cited his *bon-mots*; and even Mademoiselle Mennequin was always remarking '*C'est un jeune homme si distingué que Monsieur le Vicomte!*' till Miss Barnsley began to regret that the Phœnix would not arrive till a large proportion of his birthday guests were assembled. But his mother and sisters, instead of venturing to regret that he should come so late, seemed to marvel at his good-nature in condescending to come at all. Meanwhile, Lady Shoreham's brother Lord Tynemouth, with his two pretty, laughing, good-humoured daughters, Flora and Jessie Devereux, were already installed at the Abbey; and it gratified Margaret to find that the arrival of their pleasant chatty cousins made no difference in the attentions she experienced from the ladies of the house.

If the truth must be told, poor Margaret's presence was more courted at the Abbey, than her absence noted at Stokeshill Place. Miss Winston, enjoying the first holiday vouchsafed her for the last twelve years, profited by the opportunity to fulfil dinner engagements of nearly the same standing, with her worthy friend Mrs. Squills, the consort of the family apothecary, and her civil friend Mrs. Dobbs, the lady of the Westerton attorney.

So deeply engaged, too, was Mr. Barnsley at that critical period, in winding up his executorship accounts with 'William, Viscount Shoreham, a minor,' that, except at the moment of pouring out his own tea, he scarcely missed either daughter or governess. It was his custom to pass his evenings writing in his library; and it seemed unimportant whether, during this peremptory occupation, his only child stitched away her uneventful hours in the adjoining chamber, or were thrust into the press of the gay world at Wynnex Abbey. He had such a multiplicity of accounts to cast up; such calculations to make of interest and compound interest; such verifications of stock receipts, such examinations of bankers' books; that with as many daughters as king Priam, he would have been unable to bestow more than half a thought upon the family.

All the leisure he could give to reflection, indeed, was engrossed by the unpleasant aspect of his connection with Hawkhurst Hill. At the Quarter Sessions, he had extended his hand in mechanical salutation to old Sullivan, and received a chilling bow in return. The rebuff had been inflicted in presence of a quarter of the county. The Sullivans chose to make their resentment as public as possible; the Sullivans, his fast friends and excellent neighbours from the day of his instalment at Stokeshill; the Sullivans, who though near relatives of the Woodgate family, had taken pleasure in doing honour to their superseders.

Barnsley was not only stung to the quick by the offence, but deeply mortified by the apprehension that the suspense in which he had so patiently waited a vacancy in the representation of Westerton, might have been borne in vain. Old Sullivan had long been the confidant of his projects; he might perhaps take malicious pleasure in starting his eldest son as a candidate.

Barnsley almost determined to sound the young man's views upon the subject. He knew that Brereton was staying at Wynnex; and it was easy to ride over on pretext of seeing his daughter, before the Hawkhurst family joined the general assemblage.

'Who on earth is this quiz coming across the lawn with Lady Shoreham?' demanded Flora Devereux of her cousins, as she stood at the window of the young ladies' room, in which they were all idly busy at their different tables. 'Leathers and top boots; with just such a striped blue and buff waistcoat as grandpapa has on in Opie's picture!'

'I dare say it is the steward. They have been settling about the marquees for the tenantry.'

'The steward?—oh! no, my dear. The smirk with which the creature is addressing my aunt, is far too familiar. What a shrewd countenance;—but what a mean narrow forehead; now he takes off his hat to Mr. Brereton!—I will lay my life it is——'

She paused, startled by the sudden movement of Miss Barnsley rising and quitting the room.

'Is she ill?—her face was crimson,' continued Flora, when the door closed upon Margaret. 'What could be the matter with her?'

'My dearest Flo, what have you done!' cried Mary Drewe, having joined her cousin at the window. 'The man is her father;—a good sort of person enough, whom mamma prodigiously patronises;—very useful, I fancy, hereabouts, in the way of magistrate and country gentleman.'

'How I do hate a country gentleman!' exclaimed Jessie Devereux, without even adverting to the indiscretion committed by her sister.

'Mr. Brereton calls them the aristocracy of the rural population,' said Lucilla, returning to her easel.

'Don't be angry with me, Lu,' cried her cousin, as giddy as before, 'but that Mr. Brereton of yours is a sad prig! Last night, he began talking some trash or other about the glimpses of perfectibility vouchsafed amid the storms and contentions of the age. You must cure him of this prosiness, my dear, if you condescend to bestow your noble presence on his castle in the bogs. Just think what Shoreham would

do with a brother-in-law, who sermonized about "glimpses of perfectibility!"'

'My brother is very fond of Mr. Brereton, who was his friend at Oxford,' said Lucilla, somewhat piqued.

'Yes—at Oxford, a prosy friend may be an advantage. No doubt, poor Brereton helped to cram my cousin for his examinations. But in the world, in *our* world,—a man who affects that sort of jargon gets voted a bore, and remains catacombed, season after season, in parliamentary dinner parties and dowager conversaziones.'

'Yes, I am fully aware of the frivolity of London society,' said Lucilla, growing angry for her admirer, and insensibly falling into his phrases. 'And what is the consequence?—that women have ceased to exercise any sort of influence. Read Henry Bulwer's book; he says that in Paris, where they raise themselves to the level of their husbands or lovers, they are consulted as oracles; they are paramount,—they are omnipotent. Not a diplomatist, not a minister, not a literary man, but is under petticoat control of some kind or other.'

'And so they are here, and in every country under the sun!' cried Flora Devereux.

'Here, the prerogative is not worth exercising. Here it is quite a different thing from the intellectual influence obtained in ——'

'Mary, Mary!' interrupted Miss Devereux, pretending to stop her ears; 'for heaven's sake, lift up your voice from behind that great frame of yours, and prevent your sister from talking so like a village schoolmaster.'

'Isn't she growing horribly pedantic?' replied the younger sister. 'But I do not trouble myself to reform her. I know that Shoreham will pronounce the final amen to Mr. Brereton's dissertations the moment he arrives; and Lucilla, you know, is only Brereton's echo.'

'What a harmonious couple they will make!' cried the incorrigible Flora—

> 'Not harsh and crabbed as dull fools suppose,
> But musical as is Apollo's lute.'

'By the way, my dear Lucilla,' cried Jessie, 'all your

new papas and mammas, the Sullivan family, are coming here to-day; what are they like?'

'Mr. Sullivan is a proud, stiff, disagreeable old gentleman, full of his Saxon descent and contempt for the modern peerage,' said Mary Drewe, answering for her sister; 'while his wife, who was sister to the late Lord Brereton, is such a mild, docile creature, that she seems to acquiesce in even the absurd arrogance which condemns herself. Then there is a daughter, Helen Sullivan, a fine open-hearted girl, with a touch of her father's pride and her mother's Irish sensibility.'

'Any sons, beside your Mr. Gradus?'

'Yes;—two at school and college, and one in society; good-natured and inoffensive, as becomes a younger son. Edward Sullivan is an invaluable acquaintance to dance with, when one wants to avoid some disagreeable partner; and to ride with, when one wants to secure the company of some third person who is not to be undertaken alone. Don't you think, my dear Miss Barnsley,' continued Mary Drewe, addressing Margaret, 'that Edward Sullivan (you know him of course?—I mean young Edward Sullivan of Hawkhurst) is an excellent stalking-horse?'—

Margaret, who, in a brief interview with her father during her absence from the room, had recovered her composure, was now almost as much startled as before. She had neither the most remote idea of the London young lady's meaning, nor the courage to inquire.

'We made wonderful use of him this spring, in town,' continued Mary, who had addressed the question to Margaret, merely to make her feel herself one of the party. 'But he disappeared just at the moment of picnics and gipsy parties, when useful men are most in request. I don't know what became of him. I suppose he came down to Hawkhurst, to repent at leisure; for I know both Shoreham and his brother were very angry with him about something wrong he had done or wanted to do; losing his money at Crockford's, or making love to some opera-dancer,—it does not much signify what.'

Margaret felt that it signified materially: for though far from what is called in love with Edward Sullivan, all the friendship which is due to an early playmate, all the interest which a young girl, brought up in uneventful retirement,

may be supposed to feel for the only man who had entered her imagination connected with the idea of her future marriage, rendered him an object of interest in her eyes.

'But I suppose, Lu, if you marry Mr. Brereton, you will have nothing to do with any of these people?'—demanded Flora Devereux of her cousin.

'Nothing whatever. Mr. Brereton is perfectly independent, or mamma never would have encouraged the match,' said Lucilla. 'In fact, I would not marry the Emperor of China, to be bored with his family.'

'But you will never bear a residence in Ireland, my dear?'

'Oh, yes!—Mr. Brereton considers it the duty of all Irish proprietors to reside on their estates—and so do I.—I was reading the other day, Miss Edgeworth's beautiful story of "The Absentee." On that point my views fully coincide with those of Mr. Brereton. At present, indeed, his place is not in a fit state to receive us. Wyatt is making out plans for a new house at Castle Brereton; but in five or six years it will be completed; and then we shall probably make it a point of conscience to go there between the London season and the shooting season. The country about Brereton Castle is out of the question for a sportsman; but he thinks of hiring a manor in Norfolk, near his uncle the Duke of Grantville's preserves. As to the winter, I mean at once to interdict Melton, and carry him off to Paris. You know, I have never been used to passing my winters in the country;—it would not agree with me. The country is so damp!'

'Well, well,—all this is charmingly arranged,' cried Flora; 'and I see you will make one of the most patriotic of Irish residents. But tell me, my dear coz, when is this marriage to take place?'

'Oh, nothing is settled at present. Indeed, mamma has endeavoured to avoid the question of proposals in form, till after Shoreham's coming of age. Some dilemma on account of money-matters, made her wish to postpone the grand question of fortune and settlements.'

Margaret felt more and more astonished at all she was hearing.—It had served to disarrange her ideas, in the first instance, that when taking leave of her father in the hall, he placed in her hand a roll of ten-pound notes, with an order that she would immediately procure herself a suitable dress

for the Wynnex ball; and an apology that, in the press of business, he had forgotten to fulfil his promise before.

But the perplexity arising from the impossibility of complying with his injunction was nothing compared with the amazement produced by the confidences of Lucilla Drewe to her cousins.

Margaret, accustomed to the abstraction of her father, the reserve of Miss Winston, and the mistrustful miserliness of communication prevalent in second-rate society, was struck dumb by the reckless frankness of her new companions. At first, she was captivated by such openness: but, on reflection, Margaret's delicacy recoiled from the uncalled-for revelation of those secret feelings of the heart, laid bare by these fashionable girls with as little idea of immodesty, as they experienced in the exhibition of their naked shoulders.

'How very foolish they would consider me,' thought poor Margaret, bending over her work, 'if they knew, that while they are talking so coolly of their love affairs, I have not even courage to consult them about the means of procuring this unlucky ball-dress!'

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Holloway (or as he was commonly called in the county 'Old Holloway,' from having been from his youth upwards, a squaretoes of the squarest description) was a member of that honourable class of country squirehood, which represents in England the unchartered nobility of other countries. His estates at Withamstead, fully equalled in extent the *majorats* which in France and Italy confer titular distinctions; and his family, though of no great antiquity, held an honourable footing in the county,—dating its ascension from yeomanship to esquirehood, from the same epoch which beheld the three-cornered hat of William the Dutchman, exchanged for the Crown of Great Britain.

From that period, the house of Holloway had exhibited the usual sequence of prosperity to prudence; its generations were not numerous, but each of them was a wise one!—An estate of six thousand a year, in those times considerable, had increased to more than double the amount by yearly

gradation; for instead of diminishing their substance, by alliance with the poorer families of the nobility, they consolidated their fortune by intermarriage with their own opulent class. Thus, the family prospered in all its branches.

For though the first esquire of the name had shown an example duly followed by his successors, of what is Englishly called, in bad English, 'making an eldest son,' this feudal custom did not produce the same evil effects in such a family as the Holloways as in more aristocratical tribes, which cannot dig, and to trade are ashamed. The squires of Withamstead—(once Farm,—next Place,—next Hall)—having no personal dignity to keep up or station to entertain in the Court or Constitution of England, were at liberty to lay by and put out to profit, as many yearly thousands as enabled them to settle their younger sons in comfort and respectability. Instead of obtaining for one a pair of colours in the Guards, for another some small, intellect-stifling, government sinecure,—as must have been the case, had Robert and John Holloway prefixed to their names the unprofitable distinction of 'Honourable,'—their father purchased for one, a share in a thriving dockyard, of which he gradually made himself sole proprietor; for another, a partnership in an old-established bank; for a third, a cotton factory; for a fourth, a brewery. Each brother of the present representative of the family was now enjoying his three or four thousand a year, and founding a family of his own, without encroachment on the property of the parent stock. Hardingwood Holloway, who had represented the borough of Westerton in Parliament for thirty years, stood not higher in estimation to the west of Temple Bar, than did his wise brethren to the east.

But a cloud was at length impending over the prosperity of the family. George Holloway, its heir apparent, afforded living proof that wise fathers do not always beget wise children; for a thicker-headed fellow never did honour to the squirearchy. At college where, as at a military mess, the give-and-take order of pleasantry forms one of the enjoyments of jovial life, Holloway had been occasionally twitted with the mercantile vocation of his uncles; and unable to furnish the retort courteous expected by his gibers, found himself at length a mark for contempt instead of a butt for

raillery. The young fellow-commoners, his companions, despised him for being dull, and he fancied they despised him for not being a lord! The arrow thus launched had sunk deep into his heart. In after-life, people found him too stupid to quiz; and the first wound, uneffaced by any deeper scar, went on growing with his growth, and strengthening with his strength; while every new batch of peers afforded a stimulus to his sufferings. Somewhat deaf and by no means a conversational man, he took no note of the flouts lavished from all sides upon these gentry of the King's creation; he knew only that it was a mighty hard thing they should be entitled to walk out of a room before himself, and, by attaining a place at table above the salt, secure the best slice of the haunch, or the liver wing of the fowl, while he was dieted on drumsticks.

For his father possessed an estate of nearly twenty thousand a year, in that county which the brags of Bonaparte and the panic of Pitt rendered, at the beginning of the present century, as important as in that of Cæsar. Young Holloway felt that if Corinth was esteemed by the ancients the key of Greece, Dover might be called the patent Bramah of England; and when he beheld his father's yeomanry corps galloping on the downs in a paroxysm of the invasion fever, George fancied he could discover in the Birmingham helmet that sat heavy on his brows, a foreboding of that future coronet which was to add another baron to the heroic annals of Kent.

Still, old Holloway would not hear of it. He felt himself too great to be made a baronet, not great enough to be made a peer. The distinction which was to raise him to the head of a table, would depreciate him to the fag-end of the aristocracy; and he must stand as low in the upper house, as he stood high in the lower. No ennoblement of public service consecrated in his person a distinction, to which mere opulence affords a prop, but can never afford a basis.

Nevertheless George, who from a dull young man was plodding on into a duller middle aged, grew heavier in mind and body as he advanced in years; and this was the only weight he acquired in the world. His inventive faculties were not bright enough to create for himself even a new object of ambition. You might as well expect the Witham-

stead oaks to bring forth some fine season almonds instead of acorns, as for Holloway, (junior though no longer young,) to fancy the words, great man, could mean anything but a lord.

All those ten years of Lord Shoreham's minority, which did nothing for the young squire but convert him from a man of thirty into a man of forty, had served to confirm him in this fixed idea. He never enjoyed a day's shooting at Wynnex Abbey, without feeling that the seal of its superiority over Withamstead Hall consisted in a livery-button; he could not bear to hear even the keepers advert to 'my late lord's time.' He feared that, as plain George Holloway, he might be confounded with his uncle, the brewer,—George Holloway, of Holloway's entire; although the minister's grateful adjuration to his father to 'name what he wished done for him,' might at any moment distinguish him not only from the relative whom that vulgar fellow Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge designated as the Bacchus of the *Vat*-ican, but enable him to take precedence of Sir Richard Woodgate with his roll of antediluvian parchments. His one idea had germinated, like a grain of mustard seed, and spread its shade in all directions.

At length, by hearing the point constantly insisted on, old Holloway began to be convinced that, to do justice to his family, he ought to do violence to his prejudices. His younger son Cyril, in the enjoyment of a living of two thousand a-year, fancied his name wanted only the recommendation of Honourable, to acquire the still more flattering qualification of Archdeacon and Dean; while two superannuated Misses Holloway (whose tart tempers, united with their scraggy ugliness had condemned them to spinsterhood even under circumstances so propituous to matrimony, as being great ladies in a large country neighbourhood,) trusted that the preference, usually conceded to youth and beauty, might for once be accorded to precedence. Aware that Closeman, of Cinnamon Lodge, the wag of the neighbourhood, distinguished them from the other 'maids of Kent,' as the old maids of Kent—just as one sees the Old Blue Boar distinguished from the New,—they trusted that a peerage in the family would make nymphs of them at once. On all sides, they beset their father. Even poor old Mrs.

Holloway's eyes twinkled through her spectacles, at the notion of hearing herself addressed as 'Your ladyship.'

What passed on the subject between stupid George and old Holloway, and old Holloway and the quick-witted minister, did not transpire. Perhaps the Bacon of Tory times may have been of opinion, that old Holloway of Withamstead was too substantial a man for the commons;—that though the old dog was an exceedingly safe beast while stretched at ease before the fire with the whole hearth-rug at his disposal, he might turn and snarl should his tail be trod on; for the honourable member for Westerton was the very man to resist anything like encroachment on the agricultural interest.

In short, a peerage was accorded with heartier good-will than it had been asked; and though to keep up the charter of cabinet treble-dealing, much was said of the immensity of the claims on government for such concessions, old Holloway went back to Great George Street, as sure of his Barony of Withamstead, as he was of repenting the demand before five years were over his head.

A large and severely canvassed creation having occurred only a short time previous to the arrangement, it seemed unadvisable to appear just then before the public, a single spy, when the 'battalions,' had been so hooted. Holloway agreed to wait; and the suspense, as in most other instances, served to increase his estimation of the thing waited for. Having armed himself with courage to undergo an operation, it was a hard thing to sit bound in his chair, waiting the convenience of the operator. The ministry might change; or he might himself pay the debt of nature, before the premier paid the debt of gratitude; and go down to the family vault, without having a coronet engraved on his coffin-plate.

Thus, the dilemma which fidgeted poor Barnsley month after month on the threshold of parliament, kept the whole family of Holloway in a most amphibolous position;—with a twofold aspect, like the shield set up in the crossway, which was one side gold, one side silver.

The two prim Misses were afraid of appearing suspiciously dignified, or superfluously condescending. The family coach wanted reparation, but it was absurd to launch a new one

that might require revarnishing after its armorial illustration; and Mrs. Holloway, when looking at her tea-spoons, or her hall-chairs, could scarcely resist the temptation of issuing premature orders for the grand reform. Yet to the inquisitive congratulations of her humdrum country neighbours, the old lady was invariable in her reply of—'Bless your heart,—even if it *was* so,—for *you* I should always remain plain Mrs. Holloway!'

Such was the situation of affairs when the epoch of Lord Shoreham's majority arrived; and it was tacitly understood that old Holloway would be gazetted as Lord Withamstead, of Withamstead, in the county of Kent, between the ensuing prorogation of parliament and its reassembling for business. The two elderly young ladies heaved a sigh as harsh as a north-wester, at the disappointment at having to appear among the Hon. Misses Devereux and Drewe undistinguished from the vulgar herd of Sullivans and Barnsleys; little suspecting that the proud family of Hawkhurst looked down on such distinctions from the refinement of mind, as much as Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge, from coarseness;—that while Closeman gave his old neighbour a punch in the side wherever he met him, exclaiming—'Well, so you're going to be made a lord?—much good may it do you?' Sullivan would not have adverted to such a thing as a newly created peer in the squire's presence, any more than have '*parlé de corde dans la maison d'un pendu*.'

Meanwhile, in their uncoroneted family-coach, the Holloways were making their way to Wynnex,—the respectable old couple, and the two sharp-edged Misses;—while, driven by his servant in a handsome phaeton, came stupid George, the future ornament of the aristocracy, looking thicker and more consequential than usual.

'Lady Shoreham seemed to wish us to come early,' said old Holloway to his wife. 'She wants me to be acquainted with the young Viscount previous to our formal meeting with the lawyers. Barnsley's accounts have been some days in their hands; so that there will be nothing for Lord Shoreham and his mother to do to-morrow, but give us our discharge. I venture to say, Barnsley has been as exact in all the forms of the business, as if he had been professionally employed. It has cost him much time and pains. No executorship was ever more conscientiously performed.'

'Mr. Barnsley, Sir, you know, *was* formerly in business,' observed Miss Holloway, who had never forgiven his resistance to her project of settling herself as mistress of Stokeshill Place.

'The ability to execute, and the will, are two things, my dear,' said her father. 'Few men would have set aside their own convenience and interest, as my friend Barnsley has done. Lord Shoreham can never repay all he has effected for the property. One hundred and forty-three thousand pounds do we transfer to-morrow to that young man's hands, as the savings of his minority!'

'A large sum, certainly,' said Miss Felicia Holloway, the sentimentalist of the family. 'Still, if the late Lord Shoreham had united with yourself in the executorship and guardianship, his own two brothers, it would have relieved poor dear Lady Shoreham from the labour of participation in the education of her son. Mr. Drewe, who I fancy is in the diplomatic line, and Mr. Alfred Drewe in the church, would have been more competent judges of the graces to be bestowed on a young nobleman, than a mere attorney.'

'Come, come,—not a word against my friend Barnsley,' interrupted the old gentleman. 'Ask Lady Shoreham how *she* would have liked her two brothers-in-law for guardians? When the young lord was given over in his infancy, Alfred Drewe was known to have large bets pending upon his survival. The mother of an only son is not likely to pardon such an outrage.'

'Still,' persisted Miss Felicia, 'it would have been a great thing for an inexperienced youth of Lord Shoreham's expectations, to be guarded through the rocks and shoals of London life, by eyes so vigilant, and hands so careful as those of his nearest relations. Lady Shoreham can do a great deal for her son; but she cannot escort him to clubs, or be his monitor at——'

'Pho, pho, pho!' cried the old gentleman. 'You are talking of what you know nothing about. Pray did you ever see Alfred Drewe, or his brother?'

'Many years ago, Sir;—twenty years, I fancy, when I was such a child that I remember nothing about them,' said Miss Holloway, so accustomed to prevaricate about her age, that she forgot the impossibility of deceiving her own father.

'I conclude Mr. Alfred resides at his deanery in Lincolnshire?'

Even sober old Holloway could not refrain from a laugh at the idea of the flashy Alfred Drewe, confronting the fishiness of the fens!

'You have guessed pretty wide of your mark,' said he. 'Do you recollect old Dr. Dodwell, the rector of Wynnex?'

'Very faintly, Sir; he was *very* old when I was a girl, and is now, I fancy, imbecile.'

'He has not done duty these ten years,' resumed her father. 'He became so unintelligible in the pulpit after losing his last tooth, that the parish threatened to memorial the archbishop; and Lord Shoreham was obliged to provide an efficient curate. All I wish to explain is, that he obtained the living from having been tutor to the late Lord and his brothers, most imprudently chosen after being buried his whole life in college, up to his chin in books. Knowing that the two younger Drewes were to fill fine family livings, he fancied that, what was good for Peter, was good for Paul; and tried to qualify *them*, as he had been *himself* qualified—by pedantry. But unluckily, old Dodwell, who was a very absent fellow, never perceived that it was his *elder* pupil, the future Viscount, who was becoming as addicted to black letter as the Gentleman's Magazine; while Alfred and Augustus became addicted, to the Lord knows what! The tutor was the only man in Oxford who did not know them to be the most dissipated young dogs in the university. In short, it seemed to wake the reverend divine from a dream, when Augustus was at length expelled from College; while Alfred, with the greatest difficulty accomplished his degree.'

'Expelled from college?—How very dreadful!' exclaimed Felicia, with an air of girlish innocence.

'But it was on the education of his eldest pupil (then Lord Shoreham) that Dodwell relied for absolution,' exclaimed her father. 'When taxed with having made the young peer a pedant, he did not reply like Buchanan of King James, that "'twas lucky he had been able to make so much of him," but cited the number of learned bodies of which Lord Shoreham was a member, and, like Quin of George III., exclaimed, "*I* taught the boy."'

'I have always understood,' said Miss Holloway (at all

events not understanding her father), 'that Lord Shoreham was an eminent man: did he not write that very thick book in your library about the arts cultivated among the Celts?'

'He wrote a thick book or two,—I know not upon what subject—I am no antiquarian,' said the old Squire. 'But I was talking of Dodwell. Many ill-natured people used to say that, absent as he chose to seem, his wits were smartly at work in this affair of Alfred and Augustus; for, as the latter could not take his degree, and it was impossible for Alfred to hold *all* the family livings, Wynnex fell to the share of the old tutor. And there he has been planted for the last five-and-twenty years like a pollard willow in a ditch, superannuated the greater part of his time.'

'What a sad incumbrance on the parish!' said Miss Felicia.

'Lord Shoreham had as much to answer for in presenting a mere scholar and a man of sixty to such an office, as Dodwell in the careless education he bestowed on the two Drewes. For Alfred has turned out that flagrant character,—a buck-parson; while Augustus, an idle, dissolute, inefficient man, has only been retained in his office to keep him out of the King's Bench. Such are the men whose example you think would have been more advantageous to their nephew than that of my steady friend, John Barnsley.'

'I was not aware, Sir,' replied Miss Holloway, solemnly, 'that the English aristocracy was thus unworthily represented.'

'Then, my dear, I don't know where you put your eyes and ears,' said her father. 'The gentleman in the straw hat who drove his drag against our carriage last spring as we were airing on the Hounslow Road was Parson Drewe, and the blockhead taken into custody behind the scenes the night of the riot at the opera, Augustus.'

'You don't say so!—I saw in the papers that it was an Honourable Blank Blank. What a pity that Mr. Drewe should forget what is due to his caste!'

'Or due to himself,' added her father. 'However, Lady Shoreham has wisely kept the young lord out of their way. Had they been admitted to any share in his bringing up, instead of the bank-stock receipts which my friend Barnsley showed me the other day, I would not give the young

Viscount credit for a year's solvency. Between gamblers, horse-jockeys, and opera-dancers, poor Wynnex would have had but a poor chance.'

'All's well that ends well!' observed Felicia. 'A misdirected education made the last Lord a bookworm; I trust his son will not turn out a miser. Barnsley, no doubt, will obtain complete ascendancy over him; and instead of encouraging him to field sports and manly pursuits, make him fancy an inkhorn a finer thing than a star to hang to his buttonhole.'

'My dear, you mistake John Barnsley,' said her father, mildly. 'Dearly as he loves a bit of red tape, you never saw him try to inspire any other man with the love of business. Barnsley can scarcely bear that a game certificate or excise permit should be filled up in the county by any one but himself. Had he been Lord Chancellor, he would have grudged his Vice a single cause. Aha! Here we are, I declare, at the lodge-gates of Wynnex Abbey!'

CHAPTER VIII.

Lady Shoreham, at the period of welcoming her guests from Withamstead, was a very happy woman: she had attained the brightest epoch of her life. The being who, from the moment the bells of Wynnex church announced that an heir was born to the Abbey, had formed the aim and end of her existence, was again about to be proclaimed by those iron tongues, as having attained to man's estate; and thrilling with the twofold pride of being mother of a son and mother of a peer, she felt conscious (like the militia captain reviewing his troop, in the anecdote) that the eyes of Europe were upon her!

The Viscountess was of opinion that in her son she had achieved a chef-d'œuvre. Nothing on her part had been neglected to render him perfect, according to the acceptation of those with whom she lived. A handsome-looking, high-spirited lad, he had accomplished a pony when other boys of his age can scarcely manage a donkey: and been seen at the Italian Opera, when other boys limit their enjoyments to a Christmas pantomime. He had been sent to Eton and

Oxford nearly two years younger than Browns and Smiths are considered strong enough for the tug of schoolboy wear and tear; and, finally, was known at Tattersall's and Crockford's when young gentlemen of his years scarcely attain a tail to their coatee. He had, in short, been admirably brought up! When spending his vacations with his family at Paris, Mesdames the Countesses of this, that, and the other, used to whisper to each other that so charming a creature deserved to be Parisian born; and not a tradesman in Bond Street but had issued a certificate of celebrity that young Shoreham was one of the most promising chaps about town.

The Viscountess was enchanted! Few women are invested with such absolute authority in the education of a son, and no woman could have exercised it more entirely to her own satisfaction. She had affected no tyrannic control over Shoreham; but left it to the admirable school of morals and manners in which he was placed to form his disposition. He had lived in the best company; he had acquired the best tone. He was (as the beautiful Comtesse de Fremont had called him at fifteen, and as Lady Catalpa called him now) a charming creature. The results of so much forbearance on his mother's part would doubtless be repaid by the concession of unlimited influence over his conduct. He would fall in with her expectations, and increase the small fortune of his sisters; and perhaps, of his own accord, replace the advantages and allowances she forfeited by his attaining his majority. But this was of secondary importance. Lady Shoreham's main object was, that her son should become a leading man in fashionable society.

It is true that, for the last year, she had experienced occasional uneasiness which she confided neither to her daughters nor to Barnsley. Lord Shoreham had chosen to pass the preceding winter at Melton with Parson Drewe, and was familiarly known at Newmarket; had a particularly private box at the Olympic Theatre, and a particularly public one at the Italian Opera. He was seen in the Park, and reported in the newspapers, as the companion of flashy foreign counts, living on their wits, and having very brilliant wits to live on; the cavalier of married ladies, of somewhat equivocal notoriety. All this, Lady Shoreham held to be but part of

the routine inevitable to his social position. But she knew from long observation that there is a crisis in a lordling's life, when, like the frost-hemmed French soldiers in Russia, they must either march on or march no more. A little touch of Crockford's, Newmarket, and the corps de ballet, would do poor dear Shoreham no harm, provided it were touch and go; but if the attraction proved too much for him, and he attached himself for life to hazard, the turf, and the green-room, there was an end of his prospects. She appreciated the dangerous charm of bachelor society: she knew that, if once settled as a star of that glaring galaxy, there was no hope of retrieving him to become the centre of a system of his own.

Such was the motive of Lady Shoreham's assiduity in furnishing the Abbey in a style to remove all affectation of the hunting box.

Had she left Wynnex in the rough-and-ready style of disorderliness to which it was reduced by the lapse of years, there would have been a pretext for quartering all St. James's Street within its gates; but the Alhambra saloons, and Etruscan bathing-rooms, and *moyen-age* galleries and vestibules *she* had created, rendered it too luxurious and enervate a retreat for hunting-coats and pilot-jackets. There could be now no excuse for not inviting her and his sisters to become his guests; and she was determined to profit by the privilege to the exclusion of less desirable inmates, until the choice of some creature as charming as himself to be Lady Shoreham should reduce her to the humbled position of Viscountess Dowager. She would then be content to depart in peace. Once married, there was no probability of Shoreham's falling into a system of dissipation derogatory to his place in society.

It has been already admitted that, next in her Ladyship's estimation to her own children, stood her brothers and sisters. She would have been delighted that Shoreham's choice should fall on one of Lord Tynemouth's daughters; and the frank liveliness of her nieces seemed highly in favour of such an event: shy boys of one-and-twenty being so readily captivated by the manners of persons easy of access. The fêtes at Wynnex would throw the young man into Flora and Jessie's society more than he had ever been in

London, and she determined to favour every opportunity of bringing them together. The Holloways, Barnsleys, and Sullivans, accustomed to live in close and intimate neighbourship, would doubtless herd together; while the Devereux girls, Brereton, and her nephew Sir Ross, would as naturally form a coterie apart.

Meanwhile, she was in the highest spirits. The tradesmen had been punctual in achieving their preparations; the servants were all activity, in expectation of the customary gratuities of the morrow; and though Lady Shoreham would have preferred that her son should arrive a few days before the eventful 22nd, in order to fix the extent of these and similar benefactions, she was too much accustomed to content herself with Shoreham's proceedings to find fault on such an occasion. Barnsley had complied with her hint, to leave five thousand pounds floating in the hands of Messrs. Closeman and Co., of the Westerton Bank, to meet unexpected exigencies; and all that was required to draw it forth was the magic signature of 'Shoreham.'

The sun shone—a bright searching October sun—over the dahlia beds and clustering China roses. The conservatories were in admirable bloom; the newly-fitted rooms wore their brightest gloss; and fires sparkled and logs crackled within doors, though the woods and plantations had scarcely yet lost a leaf. All was mirth and merriment at the Abbey. In the village and servants' hall, no less than in the gilded saloon—

Lo! all went merry as a marriage bell!

Even Margaret Barnsley, at first so shy and strange, was now made quite at home by the familiarity of the Devereux, and the good breeding of their cousins; and, instead of the anxiety with which she had looked forward at first to the arrival of her father and the Hawkhurst family to give her courage, she began to feel extremely uncomfortable at the idea of seeing the Sullivans. She had discovered with some satisfaction from Brereton that poor Edward was gone into Norfolk; but Helen!—how could she ever be able to support the coldness of Helen?

While the ladies were sitting together in the library, waiting the arrival of the expected guests, these ideas

weighed on poor Margaret's spirits. At length, her attentention was roused from the book she was attempting to read by Jessie Devereux's inquiries of her cousin Lucilla concerning the people who were coming.

'This guardianship business is a sad bore,' was the first sentence Margaret overheard, 'because it obliges Shoreham to have his lawyers down. But, after to-morrow, all that will be over, and we expect the Walmers,—the Marstons,—and a good many people from the other side of the country.'

'The mere neighbourhood of Westerton, does not seem to present much in the way of attraction?' observed Flora.

'Nothing whatever. The Holloways are horrors; and Mr. Brereton is the only one of the Sullivans of the family who has mixed in the world. After our first popularity-civilities mamma intends advising Shoreham to drop the neighbourhood as much as possible, and depend on London for society. Scarcely forty miles from town, you know, one need not squirefy ourselves to death, for want of a soul to talk to!'

And when, ten minutes after having uttered the speech, Margaret saw the Drewes receive Mrs. Holloway and her two stiff daughters almost as graciously as they had received herself, she trembled to think how near she had been bestowing her regard and friendship, in return for such hollow civilities.

'My son is not yet arrived,' said the Viscountess, in reply to the inquiries of old Holloway. 'Young men always find so much to do at the moment of leaving town.'

Soon afterwards she had to renew the same apologies, with greater ceremony, to the Sullivans; the solemn formality of old Sullivan, and the personal claims of Mr. Brereton's mother, seeming to entitle them to higher consideration. Helen, indeed, was received by the young ladies with more than their usual mechanical courtesy; but instead of appreciating it with the timid humility of Margaret or the vulgar obsequiousness of the Misses Holloway, she accepted their attentions as her due, and crossing the library towards the spot where Margaret stood blushing and uneasy, shook hands with her young friend so cordially, as to leave Margaret in doubt whether she could

be aware of what had been passing at Hawkhurst during her absence.

But the unembarrassed manner in which Miss Sullivan, after a few minutes' desultory conversation, observed,—'Edward is gone to my uncle's in Norfolk. He left home before we returned from St. Leonard's, or I should have persuaded him to postpone his visit till after the gay doings here,' satisfied Margaret, that the old gentleman and his son had kept their disappointment a secret from the rest of the family. The Drewes and Devereuxs, with Margaret and Helen, were soon clustered together at the conservatory end of the library *cheeping*, of a thousand young lady-like topics—new music, new works, new patterns; questioning Miss Sullivan of her sailing, and boating, and bathing expeditions at St Leonard's, and recounting former exploits of their own. Even the inexperienced Margaret could not help admiring how Ellen Sullivan's superiority in mind and manners over those to whom she was inferior in rank and superficial accomplishments, shone out, in the first half-hour they passed together. Helen seemed inaccessible to the raptures with which the Drewes spoke of the sea, the shore, the delights of yachting, the enchantments of bathing; and when Flora and her sister questioned her of the society of St. Leonard's, whether the Duchess of Avon still gave parties, or Lady St. Lawrence was to pass the winter there, Miss Sullivan replied with so unculprit-like an air, that she was unacquainted with either and had heard nothing of them at St. Leonard's,—that the Miss Holloways, who from a distance caught phrases of the conversation of the young party they dared not join, wondered at her heroism. They felt that, in her place, they should have lacked courage to expose themselves to the contempt of their noble associates.

But it would have been difficult to despise Helen Sullivan. —There was something so high-minded in the speaking glances of her eyes, something so prompt in her movements, so decided in her step,—and above all, something so candid in every word she uttered,—as to insure respect and admiration. Margaret, who had been for a moment dazzled by the lively indiscretion of speech of Flora and Jessie (arising less from frankness than the difficulty of holding their tongues), now recognised once more the beauty of that

high-toned sincerity of character, which her timid nature had long looked up to with veneration in the sister of Edward Sullivan.

Even when the group of girls were talking together of such nothingnesses as fashions, dances, and the morrow's ball, the distinction of Helen above her companions was thoroughly apparent. Although she interested herself in all that seemed to concern them, an intelligent observer might have detected at once the superiority which was said to be distinguishable in Edmund Burke while sheltering from the rain under an archway. Her brother Brereton came in from the billiard-room, and after a supercilious salutation to the Holloways, presented to his sister, at that gentleman's request, his friend Sir Ross Carmichael; when Helen, neither drawing back into primness after the Holloway style, nor launching into the flippancy after the Devereux style because a fashionable young man was added to their circle, addressed a few words to the new comer; then returned to her previous conversation.

'Shoreham is late,' observed Sir Ross, addressing his cousin. 'I should not be surprised if he was not to arrive till after dinner.'

'Oh! he is not the last,' said his sister Mary, putting up her glass to investigate how many might be missing.—'Mr. Barnsley has not yet made his appearance; and the dressing-bell has not rung.'

'My father is usually late,' Margaret ventured to observe; 'but he is always so busy!'

'And Shoreham so idle!'—said Jessie Devereux. 'Extremes meet, you see.'

'I wish they may; nothing would give me greater pleasure than to see Mr. Barnsley and Shoreham enter the room,' said Lucilla, lowering her voice, 'for I see mamma is growing uneasy at my brother's non-appearance.'

And Margaret, who had not hitherto ventured to look towards the side of the room where Lady Shoreham was placed, lest she should encounter the eye of Mr. Sullivan, now hazarded a glance in that direction, and noticed that an anxious flush was indeed overspreading the cheeks of the lady of the house. But old Sullivan was not by her side. She could discern the outline of his spare lofty figure, as he

stood pompously engaged in county-talk with his brother member of Withamstead Hall;—looking very much like what he was called by Closeman, the wag of Westerton,—Pompey's pillar in a mist.

Mr. Sullivan, indeed, was a personage awful in the sight of many besides Margaret Barnsley; reserved, haughty, and soured by an habitual gout, which he took care to designate as 'hereditary,' as if anxious to have it understood that it was a gout peculiarly his own, distinguished from the plebeian disorder afflicting his coachman and butler. Always unsociable, since the death of Lord Shoreham and the migration of the Woodgates, he felt that there was not a soul left in the neighbourhood worthy of unloosing the latchet of his gouty shoe. Barnsley, an object of especial detestation to him, had made himself endured only by the officious zeal with which he saved the great man of Hawkhurst Hill, (a descendant of Witikind the Great, and brother-in-law to Lord Brereton, and the Duke of Grantville,) a thousand disagreeable encounters with the pitiful littlenesses of borough-botheration; and when his son Edward demanded permission to pay his addresses to Miss Barnsley, it needed all the young lady's heirship to five thousand a year, to reconcile the proud old gentleman to the notion of the alliance. But it was not till Edward had again and again protested that he felt sure of having made an impression on the affections of Margaret, that Mr. Sullivan condescended to write a letter of proposal; the rejection of which caused him the bitterest vexation he had ever been fated to experience.

That the ci-devant attorney should be insensible to the honour of his alliance, had not entered into his calculations. He could not forgive himself for having courted such an affront,—he could not forgive Edward as its origin; and his son was forced to take refuge for a time from his father's reproaches, in a visit to his uncle the Duke. Mr. Sullivan would gladly have fled there too, to escape the annoyance of an encounter with Barnsley at the Wynnex fêtes. But he felt it his business to be there, maintaining among the county families the high station he was entitled to hold; nor could he, at that moment, have quitted Hawkhurst without making a confession to his wife and daughter of a

humiliation, which he had exacted a promise from Edward to keep a profound secret, even from his sister and mother.

The hateful point was the necessity of eating at the same board and dipping in the dish with Barnsley. They had met but once,—'Twas in a crowd,'—since the catastrophe; and now, as he stood in the window listening to his brother member's rigmarole about some town-hall dilemma of 'Smith insisted upon it, but Brown would not hear of it,' his anxious eye glanced ever and anon beyond old Holloway's portly outline, to the door through which Barnsley was to enter.

He had, however, nothing to fear. Barnsley—who, though he felt the necessity of being early at the Abbey in order to impart assurance to the noble minor receiving, for the first time, so large a party, had no mind to expose his coolness with the Sullivans to the notice of their neighbours—determined to dress at Stokeshill for dinner, and arrive at the last moment. In short, the dressing-bell rang and the party dispersed towards their several apartments, before either the Viscount or the executor made his appearance.

Poor Lady Shoreham was now in a panic. She felt the strange appearance it would wear to the county and her friends, if her son should fail her at such a moment; and began to fear that the prospect of having to do the honours of his house for the first time, to four or five hundred guests, besides making a speech to the tenantry, and a civil acknowledgment to the executors, had been too much for his courage. As soon as she had escorted Mrs. Sullivan and Mrs. Holloway, as in precedence bound, to their rooms, she returned hastily to the library, for the welcome sound of a carriage had reached her ear.

But, alas! it was only the London solicitor in his chaise and four; summoned by the fidgety Barnsley to attend upon the occasion.

Scarcely, however, had she turned Mr. Fagg over to the butler to be conducted to his dressing-room, when Barnsley himself was announced.

'My dear Sir,' she exclaimed, cordially extending her hand, 'you see me in the greatest perplexity!—Not a word have I heard of my son for some days past. He promised to be here on the 21st, early in the day; and now it is nearly six o'clock, and I begin to tremble lest the horror

which all young men of his age have of the word "business," should keep him away altogether! Between ourselves, I fancy we had better have put off signing these executorship and guardianship accounts till next week. But it is too late to think of it now; and, if my son should not make his appearance to-day, I must trouble you to take the head of the table. My brother Lord Tynemouth is so complete a stranger here, that he would be very little resource to me on such an occasion.'

Barnsley bowed assentingly; and Lady Shoreham, about to quit him to hurry through her dinner toilet, was gratified to observe that in *his*, Lord Shoreham's executor wore a highly respectable country-gentlemanlike appearance. Barnsley was really a handsome-looking man, when his brows were unbent and his pockets dispossessed of the packets of papers too often imparting squareness to his waist. At the present moment, indeed, his countenance shone with redoubled lustre. To do the honours of Wynnex Abbey, in presence of the Sullivans of Hawkhurst, the dear friends and relatives of the Woodgate family, was all he could desire! For once, he anticipated as much delight from cutting up a haunch, as from drawing up a case for counsel's opinion.

But while he stood bowing to the Viscountess, a sudden tumult arose in the great hall; and the yelping of dogs, the swearing of grooms, the neighing of horses, and the vociferous laughter of several strange voices, caused the colour to rise in Lady Shoreham's face.

'It is my son!' cried she, full of joy, yet full of apprehension.

And at that moment, a pretty-faced, under-sized young man, with a velvet travelling-cap on his head, and a pea-jacket on his shoulders;—his hands in his pockets, and a cigar in his mouth, shuffled into the vestibule!

CHAPTER IX.

'My dear boy!—I was afraid you were lost!' cried his mother. 'Mr. Barnsley, Lord Shoreham! Shoreham, my love, Mr. Barnsley, to whom we are all so much indebted.'

Barnsley bowed encouragingly to his young *protégé*; and Lord Shoreham, taking the cigar from his mouth, but not the cap from his head, muttered some unintelligible civility while his mother led the way into the library.

'You are very late,' said she, addressing Lord Shoreham. 'The dressing-bell has rung. Everybody is come; it wants only five minutes of six, and we dine at six precisely.'

'They must put off dinner,' replied Lord Shoreham, coolly. 'My fellows will be a quarter of an hour getting out my traps; and Gus won't be here these ten minutes.

'*Gus?*'—

'He chose to come with the parson in his britschka, on account of my smoking; and, by Jove, I smashed them like fun, giving them the go-by at the turnpike.'

'Gus!—The Parson!'—faltered Lady Shoreham. 'You surely have not brought down your uncles?'

'Didn't you get my letter?'—demanded her son, planting himself before the fire on the hearth-rug, with his hands again ensconced in the pockets of the pea-jacket.

'What letter?'—

'Saying that my uncles must be present at the celebration of my coming of age.—Just like the parson!' he continued, perceiving from his mother's wondering face that this was the first intimation she had received of such a calamity. 'I gave it him to put into the letter-box at Crockford's, as he was going up the steps; and I dare say 'tis still in his pocket, unless the rascal took it out at night to light his pipe.'

Lady Shoreham stood for a moment aghast.

'But, my dear boy, this is really a most unreasonable proceeding!' faltered she, at last. 'There literally is not a bed in the house. I had the greatest difficulty in making out one for our friend Mr. Barnsley.'

'Why, who the devil have you got here?' inquired Lord Shoreham, with an air of disgust.

'All the families of the immediate neighbourhood; besides my brother Tynemouth, and——'

'Well, well,' interrupted Lord Shoreham, 'let who will be turned out, room must be made for Gus and the parson. My uncles are the only people *I* have invited, and they must be properly accommodated. How deuced unlucky that you did not get my letter!'

'Rather say, unlucky that you did not——'

'Shoreham, my boy!' shouted a strange voice, as a strange head, in a strange straw hat, was thrust into the library,—'are you here or hereabouts?'

'Come in, Alfred, come in!' cried the dutiful nephew, without stirring from the hearth-rug; while Lady Shoreham escaped through the saloon, to recover her self-possession and give the necessary orders; and Barnsley bowed and stared, as the extraordiuary figure of Parson Drewe advanced into the room, gaitered and jacketed for his journey as other men equip themselves for a shooting expedition.

'Where's Gus?' inquired Lord Shoreham.

'In confab with the head coachman—finding out whether there's a tailor at Westerton he can trust to mend the spring of the britschka,' said Alfred Drewe, throwing himself into a chair, and placing his muddy leather gaiters on a beautiful ottoman embroidered by the fair hand of his niece Lucilla.—'That was a clever smash you gave us at the toll-bar;—and faith, my fine fellow, you must pay for it!'

'By Jove,—I thought you were over!' cried Lord Shoreham, laughing heartily at the recollection. 'But, I say, Alfred, what the deuce did you do with that letter of mine?'

'What letter?—To Lady Catalpa?'

'No, no—to my mother.'

'Your mother?—Devil a word do I remember about the matter!—I took Lady Cat's myself, as an excuse for a call. If you trusted me with anything for the post, I dare say I gave it to my tiger to drop in; and the young dog (who is apt to take a drop too much) seems to have dropped all recollection of the business.'

'Very unlucky,' said Lord Shoreham. 'But we must make the best of it.'

'By George,—how they have ruined the place!' ejaculated Parson Drewe, looking round. 'How easy to see, by all these gimcracks, that a woman's finger has been in the pie;—(hope it won't prove a *pigeon* pie—eh! Shoreham?)—Not a chair for a fellow's legs, when he comes in from shooting; and, instead of a good comfortable rug before the fire, for man and beast to stand or lie on, a strip of velvet painted to look like a leopard's skin!—Why not a real leopard's skin at once?—Except, now I think of it, that they're all bought

up for the Bloomsbury hammercloths. Tigers are sure to sport a leopard's skin.'

'Come, come, don't put your foot into it,' cried the young peer. 'I'll take odds that the Mayor of Westerton has got one, at this moment, on his family coach. But here comes Augustus. Take it coolly—for he's in a devil of a way about the britschka.'

Barnsley felt uncomfortable: and but that his black silk stockings and white waistcoat left no pretext for retiring to dress, would have been heartily glad to get out of the room. The 'devil of a way' of a man recently taken up as disorderly in a row at the opera, excited fearful surmises in his mind. What, therefore, was his surprise when, the library door having opened an inch or two and shut again, a spare, middle-aged man, of formal demeanour and immoveable countenance, traversed the room like clock-work, seated himself gingerly in a chair, and began filliping off the dried spots of mud contracted by his nether habiliments during his journey.

'Well, what do the fellows say;—is it much of a smash?' —inquired the parson.

'Not much,' replied Augustus, in a calm, dry, voice. 'We shall get back to town with it, and then it must go to Hobson, (Hobson's your man, I think?') addressing his nephew, 'and be done up. The linings are ruined, and the scratch can't be got out without varnishing.'

Barnsley, startled by the quiet apathy of the modern dare-devil, was shocked to perceive the proverb reversed, and that for 'Nunky pays for all,' was in future to be read 'nephew.'—He almost shuddered when he thought of the hundred and forty-two thousand pounds to be transferred on the morrow!

'We have but five minutes to dress for dinner,' said Lord Shoreham, deferring to a more convenient season any remarks he might have to make on this summary arrangement.

'Then I shall wait for supper!' was the quiet reply of Augustus. 'Between a journey and a meal, a bath is indispensable. Is it Lady Shoreham's custom to dine at six o'clock?'

'The custom of the country, I fancy.'

'And a deuced good custom, too!' cried Alfred. 'Shore-

ham, my boy! I hope you're not ass enough to have a French cook? A French cook may be a good thing in France; where the devil sends the meat, no matter where the cooks come from. But 'pon my soul, to see one of those frog-faced fellows larding a side of venison, or stewing down a fine turbot till you might card it into wool, is enough to drive one distracted.'

'I know nothing, at present, of the system here,' said Lord Shoreham, spoiling a fine solid glowing fire by a superfluous poke; 'but let me hear of anything French in *my* kitchen, except truffles or capers, and out of the window it goes—neck or nothing.'

And after a vehement, master of the house-like ring, he desired the groom of the chambers to show him to his room, following him across the hall arm in arm with the parson; while Augustus remained stationary before the fire, gently caressing his own shins.

'A very fine young man, Sir!' observed Barnsley, after a silent *tête-à-tête* of some minutes.

'Who, Sir,—my brother?'—demanded Augustus, in the same quiet voice.

'I meant Lord Shoreham,' said Barnsley, with a patronising smile, amazed at the gentleman's dulness. 'I had the honour of knowing the late Lord well.'

'Sir, you have the advantage of me—I never knew any one less!' observed Augustus, as impassive as before, but beginning to stroke his chin instead of his legs.

'Have you brought down anything new, sir?'—demanded Barnsley, after another trying pause.

'Nothing but a pair of pumps,' replied Augustus Drewe, as drily as ever.

'You misunderstand me, my dear Sir,' said Barnsley; 'I wished to inquire if there was anything new in town when you left it?'

'Asparagus is in, and, I fancy, sea-kail,' replied Augustus vacantly; and Barnsley perceiving at length that he was mystified, and doubtful whether to resent as an affront what might be only the commonplace of an eccentric, like 'Gus,' wisely took up the newspaper to screen his irritation. In the course of a few minutes, he heard the party assembling in the adjoining saloon, in which it was the custom of the

house to await the ringing of the second bell; and was about to proceed thither, leaving the silent gentleman to the enjoyment of his own ineffability, when Lord Tynemouth, entering the library to deposit a pamphlet he had taken to his own room, bestowed a more than commonly civil welcome on Barnsley, whom he considered an invaluable friend to the widowed Viscountess.

'Ha! Drewe, my dear fellow,' cried he, perceiving Augustus, in the midst of his salutations to Barnsley, 'what are you doing here in boots, with the second bell about to ring? When did you arrive?'

'In the course of the morning.'

'You did not come, then, with Shoreham?'

'We came together.'

'But *he* arrived only half an hour ago.

'Indeed!—I never wear a watch.'

'Better go and dress,' said Lord Tynemouth good-humouredly. 'We shan't wait for you.'

'Most likely I shall have to wait for *you*,' replied Mr. Drewe. 'I always dine on the second course.'

'Ay, ay!—stick to your old Oxford stint, eh?—roast fowl and apple pie?'

'Certainly a modern dinner does occupy a most unreasonable space of time,' observed Barnsley, in a deprecating tone.

'But, my dear Drewe,' resumed Lord Tynemouth, who did not wish the harmonies of the evening to be interrupted by the oddities of his nephew's uncle, his own college friend, 'we have half a dozen pretty women of our party;—sure you don't intend to appear in dishabille?'

'Why not?—They have my full permission to appear in theirs.

'I don't speak on their account,' said Lord Tynemouth, with a significant glance at Barnsley; 'but Sir Horton Losely, who is staying here, appears every day at dinner in his shooting-jacket; and if you favour us with your travelling-dress, the ill-natured world will say, as it has so often said before, that you are aping him.'

'Thank you, for the hint,' said Gus, leisurely rising. 'I would not have it said I dressed my stable-boy after Losely.' And, without further remonstrance, he quitted the room.

'I'll lay my life,' said Lord Tynemouth, laughing heartily at the success of his stratagem, 'that Drewe will appear at table in a court dress, lest his originality should be suspected. Considering how strange a fellow he is by nature, I can't understand why he should affect strangeness. Most eccentric people are so from absence of mind, and not taking note of the customs of the world; my friend Drewe takes note of them only to bid them defiance.'

'A very singular person. I never saw him before, except at the late Lord Shoreham's funeral. He does not seem to recollect me,' observed Mr. Barnsley.

Lord Tynemouth, who felt certain that Drewe not only perfectly recollected the interloping executor, but that much of his recent oddity arose from dissatisfaction at finding himself in Barnsley's company, replied evasively—'His whole life long Augustus Drewe has been doing the most outrageous things, as methodically and quietly as a Quaker. With all the parson's slang and noise, he is less of a rake than Augustus, who never speaks above his breath or moves faster than a tortoise.'

'I trust in Heaven,' said Barnsley, more energetically than was his wont, 'that they will not lead their nephew into mischief. It will be a sad thing if, after all the pains Lady Shoreham has taken with and for that young man, his two uncles should persuade him to turn the house out of windows.'

'Or his mother and sisters out of doors,' thought Lord Tynemouth; but notwithstanding his respect for Barnsley's financial abilities, he did not think it necessary to trust him with the dawning apprehensions of the Viscountess.

The dinner, meanwhile, in spite of the contrariety by which it was preceded, passed off brilliantly. There were enough county people to make it pleasant to each other, and enough ex-county people to lend animation to the natives. The two honourable uncles and Sir Ross being of the family, and in some measure at home, Lady Shoreham was supported by Holloway and Sullivan, who talked to each other across her, throughout dinner, one of himself, the other of his farm, fancying themselves extremely attentive to their neighbour. But Lady Shoreham took no heed of her two elders. Her eye was fixed upon the chair which poor Barnsley had been so

near filling, and which, to her horror and disgust, she saw occupied by Alfred Drewe. As they were taking their places, her son had retreated from the seat assigned to him, exclaiming—

'Come, come, Parson,—we must have you in the chair! —Nobody can say grace here but you; and nobody can cut up a haunch like you in the three kingdoms.'

And having thus constituted him his delegate, the young Lord placed himself between Jessie and Flora Devereux; the only extenuating circumstance that could have pacified the wrath of his mother. Opposite to him and next to his sister Mary, a chair was left vacant, into which Augustus glided towards the end of the first course, attired in the perfection of a gentlemanly toilet; and as he concluded that his antipathy, Losely, was seated out of sight on the same side of the table as himself, he made it a point to be as chatty and agreeable as possible. Miss Felicia Holloway, beside whom he was placed, could not reconcile it to herself that this well-bred, well-dressed, demure individual could be the dissolute Augustus Drewe, of whom her father had spoken in the morning in terms of such severe reprobation.

Margaret Barnsley had now ample opportunity of gratifying her curiosity relative to the long-dreamed-of Phœnix of Wynnex Abbey. Seated exactly opposite to Lord Shoreham, she found courage, while his attention was engrossed by his cousins, to take a survey of his person, and had no difficulty in deciding, that Lord Shoreham was almost as good-looking as his sisters had announced him. But even while admitting this, Margaret felt conscious of an unfavourable impression. There was an overbearing positiveness in every word he uttered; and a self-sufficient elation of manner,—a bold investigating expression of eye,—which revolted her. Her fancy had endowed the young Lord, educated under petticoat government with sisters only for his early associates, with a half-timid, half-chivalrous tone of romance; but Lord Shoreham sat conversing with his pretty cousins in the tone of coarse raillery adopted by one school-boy towards another.

Meanwhile poor Barnsley felt less at ease than he had ever expected to feel at Wynnex Abbey. In that room, where he had been accustomed to receive the tenants, and

audit the accounts,—to issue his unimpugnable ukases and make his rules absolute,—he found himself suddenly sunk into nothingness, and sat on the well-stuffed red mororco dining chair as uneasily as though it had been of red-hot iron. The fates had placed him between Mr. Sullivan—towards whom he stood in so disagreeable a predicament—and Miss Holloway, whose personal dislike he fully returned. The previous impertinence of Augustus Drewe had disconcerted him. The ungraciousness of the young Lord made him apprehend that he might have difficulties to encounter in the winding-up of his executorship accounts. He felt that Stokeshill had gained a disagreeable neighbour, and Wynnex Abbey lost all its attractions. Even Margaret displeased him. Seated between the supercilious Brereton and Sir Ross, both more disagreeable than usual from their desire to merit the approval of the three fashionable men added to their party, she never opened her lips. Her fluttered countenance and unassured deportment, so different from that of the lively chatterers around her,—so different from the frank self-possession of Helen Sullivan,—were inconsistent with her claims on society, as heiress of Stokeshill. Among other vexations at that moment stirring up his ire, he felt that Miss Winston was not the preceptress he ought to have chosen to polish the manners of his daughter. A moment's collision with the world will sometimes serve to depreciate, in our estimation, that which, by our own fireside, we have regarded as beyond the reach of censure; and could Mr. Sullivan have guessed the secret mortification of the man from whom he sat pointedly averting his dignified countenance, his desire of vengeance would have been amply gratified.

A momentary glance of satisfaction, however, passed over his countenance, when he saw Lord Shoreham not only invite his daughter to take wine with him, but in the course of dinner repeatedly and pointedly address her. Margaret's replies, though flurried, were reasonable and lady-like; while the blush that overspread the delicacy of a skin to which the dark braids of her hair imparted almost dazzling whiteness, added wonderfully to her beauty. Of all the girls present, Margaret Barnsley was decidedly the prettiest. But even her father was surprised that Lord Shoreham should so soon

have made the discovery, under so many disadvantages of manner.

A still more flattering distinction awaited her, when, after dinner, the party re-assembled. Lord Shoreham,—passing hastily through the drawing-room, (in which Holloway, Sullivan, and Lord Tynemouth, were pottering over their coffee among the elderly ladies,) to the library, where the young people had taken refuge,—at once descried Margaret, alone, at the furthest end, turning over, for the twentieth time, Brockedon's Alpine scenery as a pretext for keeping aloof from the lively circle by whose sprightliness her spirits were overpowered. That he should condescend to take immediate possession of the vacant seat upon the sofa by her side, would have filled her with amazement, had she not remembered that, though only slightly presented to him before dinner in a group including the Miss Holloways and Helen Sullivan, the name of Barnsley must have appealed to his gratitude and sensibility. It was her father who was honoured in her person.

Margaret felt shocked indeed for not being more gratified by his attentions, when Lord Shoreham laughingly protested that her name and countenance were blended with his earliest reminiscences; and that it did not need the praises he had recently heard of her in the letters of his sisters, to bring her at once to his remembrance. 'Edward Sullivan and I have talked you over a thousand times,' said Lord Shoreham, with an arch smile. 'I say nothing of Brereton; because he talks so much of every thing and every body, that one never listens to half he says.'

'The Miss Devereux are going to sing,' said Margaret, by way of a signal of silence to her voluble companion.

'With all my heart, if it amuses them,' said Lord Shoreham, contemptuously. 'Are you fond of music?'

'Passionately!—We have had music every night since I have been here. Your sisters sing and play delightfully!'

'I am afraid they have sadly bored you,' replied Lord Shoreham, so accustomed to the *persiflage* of his gay associates, that he concluded her to be quizzing. 'But young ladies who lose half their lives in acquiring accomplishments, must of course lose the other half in displaying them. I shall

take care they don't bore *me* with that sort of thing at Wynnex.'

'*Bore?*' reiterated Margaret almost terrified at his inference;—'you surely do not imagine that I intended to—'

'Oh! you intended nothing but what was right and proper. I shall profit by your hint, and put a stop to their exhibitions.'

'If you did but know how welcome what *you* call exhibitions are at Westerton! We never hear any good music. Your sisters first introduced us to that of Bellini and Donizetti.'

'Mightily obliged you were to them, no doubt, for the introduction!' said the Viscount, still fancying himself sneered at. 'But if you want music, get my uncle Alfred to sing for you. The parson has the finest voice you ever heard;—equal to Braham's!'

'In what style does he excel?—Italian, like your sisters, or English glees, or—'

'Alfred?—Alfred sings any thing—every thing—either at sight or sound. His ear and memory are the most astonishing things.'

'Could he not be persuaded to take a part with your sisters in some trio?'

'Oh! d—n trios!—Alfred will sing you something of his own;—or if you like it better, something of Tommy Moore's. Alfred sings some capital things; "The Dogs'-meat Man," the—'

'The Dogs'-meat Man?' faltered Margaret, fancying in her turn that she was quizzed.

'Do *you* sing it?'—inquired Lord Shoreham.—'Oh! *do* sing it,'—cried he half rising from the sofa, as the extreme confusion of his companion seemed to give consent. 'I can teach you two famous new verses.'

'Indeed I cannot,—I never even heard of it before,' cried Margaret, her whole countenance brightened by the effort which brought vivid blushes to her cheeks.

'Lucilla shall sing it you to-morrow,' was his compassionate reply. 'You live a great deal in the country, I fancy?'

'Wholly in the country. My father goes to town; but we always remain in Kent.'

'So much the better,—for I mean to remain a vast deal in Kent myself,' he resumed, sprawling on the satin cushions of the sofa, with a degree of familiarity that would have dismayed Miss Winston. 'Lu and Mary tell me I shall be bored to death here; that there's not a soul worth a hang in the whole neighbourhood. But, by George, they may say what they will, that girl of old Barnsley's is deuced handsome.'

Margaret started. Her ears must certainly deceive her!

'Don't you think so?'—persisted Lord Shoreham; and his eyes fixed upon the fine figure of Helen Sullivan, who was crossing the library, after having accompanied her valetudinarian mother to her own room, served in some measure to explain the strange apostrophe of her companion. In the flurry of a first introduction to so many strange faces, he had evidently mistaken *her* for the daughter of Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst, and Helen for herself!—To undeceive him on this point was urgent. But how to begin?—Margaret's cheeks tingled—Margaret's voice faltered—she had not a word at her command.

'The attorney's daughter has none of her father's shoppy underbred look,' he added. 'One *might* mistake her for a gentlewoman.'

'I fear you are under some mistake,'—stammered poor Margaret.

'Mistake?—no! no mistake!' cried Lord Shoreham laughing, 'I never saw a finer girl!'

'I meant to say,' faltered Margaret, 'that——'

But at this moment, Brereton approached with a supercilious air, to request Margaret would join Miss Sullivan at the piano.

'My sister wishes you to accompany her,' said he, addressing Margaret with unceremonious disdain.

'Indeed she must excuse me!' replied the trembling girl; 'I cannot sing to-night.'

'My dear,' interrupted her father, offering his hand to conduct her to the group of young ladies, 'Lady Shoreham begs you will oblige Miss Sullivan, who has a cold, and cannot be prevailed to sing anything but a second.'

Margaret was again about to remonstrate, but a look from her father,—a look such as she was not accustomed to dis-

obey,—sent her trembling to the instrument; and the Drewes, astonished at the excellence of her performance, and the purity of style acquired from the able organist of Westerton, could not recover their surprise at the diffidence with which, during her stay at the Abbey, she had disclaimed all pretension to musical accomplishments.

But what was *their* surprise compared with the amazement of their brother?

CHAPTER X.

Never did a sovereign on the eve of abdication retire to rest with such elation of spirit as Barnsley on the eventful night preceding Lord Shoreham's attainment of his majority! He had noticed the *tête-à-tête* between the young Lord and his daughter: he knew that Margaret had been especially distinguished—but nothing wherefore.

Already the vague matrimonial plot of his imagination seemed to thicken; and on the eve of relinquishing power and greatness, greater greatness was apparently about to be thrust upon him in the face of the whole county of Kent. If a fine thing to have been executor to the old viscount, it would be far finer to become father-in-law to the young one.

To do Barnsley justice, such notions were not the only ones tending to his gratification: he enjoyed the consciousness of his own well-doing. The noble roof over his head, so enhanced in prosperity under his administration, might at that hour have been dismantled and dilapidated under the executorship of the two Drewes.

He had not only done his best, but his best was eminently meritorious. Rejoicing like a Chancellor of the Exchequer over the returns of a favourite tax, he felt entitled to congratulate himself on the soundness of his head no less than the soundness of his heart. He had, in fact, done for conscience' sake more than many an auditor of many a noble house performs for the 'con-sideration' of a thousand or two per annum!

He had noted, in the course of the day, the confidence entertained by the Wynnex tenants in the influence he was likely to exercise over their young Lord. In passing for

the last time as a potentate through the three villages of the domain, he was stopped here, and arrested there, with entreaties for his interest at the Abbey. The conciliation of speech attempted by himself towards his intended constituents at Westerton characterised the various petitions offered up to him at Wynnex. A word from him to my Lord, was to drain marshes, rebuild hovels, construct bridges, and replenish alms-houses!

Barnsley laid his head upon his pillow filled with visions of a viscountess's coronet adorning that of his daughter; and satisfied that though he should now have leisure for the legislation and improvement of Stokeshill, his influence at Wynnex Abbey was to be greater than ever.

And Sullivan had seen all this!—Sullivan, by whose incivility he had been so pointedly aggrieved at the Magistrates' meeting! The arrogant esquire of Hawkhurst Hill could not but have observed that the damsel whom he had scarcely thought worthy his younger son was courted with attentions far more flattering than those of Edward Sullivan; nor could poor Barnsley refrain from exultation at the thoughts of the distinction likely to be lavished upon Margaret on the morrow.

Such, and similar cogitations, kept the man of business waking till a late hour. Yet he was the earliest astir next morning; Lady Shoreham having commissioned him to see that all was right,—that the bonfires were properly stacked,—the pitch-pots in train for lighting up,—the ox likely to be warmed through,—the champagne to be thoroughly iced,—the Roman candles to burn blue! Relying on his activity, she wished to be at liberty to bestow her courtesy on her guests in satin and brocade, leaving to Barnsley the frieze coats and calimanco petticoats.

But, on this occasion, Barnsley experienced, for the first time, from the upper servants of the Abbey and their London coadjutors those resistances and impertinences which upper servants are apt to bestow upon interfering friends of the family.

Perhaps they had gathered sufficient indication of the altered aspect of affairs from the 'own gentlemen' of Parson Drewe and his brother to warrant suspicion that Barnsley's kingdom was taken from him and given to the Jews and

money-lenders; for their hints that all would be done properly and in its place, whether or no Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill put himself out of *his* to interfere with them, were as 'plain as way to parish church.'

Judging it better not to signalise his exit from office by an explosion, he satisfied himself with sniffing silently in and out of the marquees, galleries, and ball-rooms till breakfast was announced.

An early one for the guests in the house was to precede the grand affair prepared for those assembling from the four quarters of the county; and between the two, the Viscount, Viscountess, and executors were to proceed into the steward's room, attended by the family solicitors, and by a scratch of the pen set each other at liberty.

Nothing could be worse-timed than the arrangement; but as Mr. Holloway had a journey to perform into Shropshire on the morrow, Lady Shoreham coincided in the plan. She had got up a handsome gilt vase and inscription for Barnsley, and Barnsley had got up a neat and appropriate speech in return; accusing himself of every executorial virtue, and recommending the young Lord to restrict himself to ready-money payments, to fear God, honour the king, and augment the portions of his sisters. The solicitors employed by Lady Shoreham declared that never had they seen a trust more ably or conscientiously executed than Barnsley's; and he felt entitled, after such a display of financial economy, to crown his works with a sermon.

Scarcely, however, were the tea and chocolate, ham and chicken, dispatched, when old Holloway, with a face as long and doleful as an undertaker's bill, took Barnsley aside to inform him that, greatly to Lady Shoreham's mortification, her son would not hear of putting pen to paper till the whole of the minority accounts had been gone over by *his* attorneys, Messrs. Centpercent, of Cork Street, St. James's; that her Ladyship's solicitor had already left the Abbey in high dudgeon; that the vase was returned to its green baize, and the speech stifled in embryo!

'I owe the lad no ill-will for what he is doing,' observed old Holloway, who, having never interfered in so much as the pruning of a plum-tree at Wynnex, was wholly uncompromised by Lord Shoreham's mistrust. 'Those two know-

ing uncles, you see, have put him to the notion of never meddling with pen and ink till he is quite clear what he is about. The fact is, my dear Sir, that the boys of this age, instead of being dupes as they were in my college days, are keen and shrewd as if they had been twenty years about town! For a moment I felt inclined to resent the poor young man's proceedings; but when I saw the deep concern of my old friend Lady Shoreham, and that very little incitement would produce, on her part, a violent outbreak against her husband's brothers, I said to myself,—"Blessed are the peace-makers," and agreed to defer the winding-up of the accounts till after my return from Bridgenorth.'

'Strange that her Ladyship should not have consulted *me* on the occasion,' said Barnsley, looking exceedingly nettled.

'My dear Sir, Lady Shoreham had not courage to talk to you on the subject. She deputed me, in order to spare your feelings as well as her own; and if you are as kindly disposed towards the widow of our old friend the Viscount as I have always considered you, you will set the poor woman's mind at ease by seeming to take the thing in good part.'

And Barnsley was by no means sorry to receive this exhortation: he did not wish to parade himself under the review of Sullivan as a defeated general; he did not wish, by taking offence, to overcloud the brightening prospects of his daughter. Nay, though aware that a couple of money-scrivening attorneys might raise up delays and molestations to protract the settlement of the estate, he knew that he had only to claim the protection of Chancery to embalm his cause in the tears of Lord Eldon, and perhaps obtain a monument in the Chancery court to his integrity as the most upright of modern guardians and executors.

Barnsley's concluding sentence, therefore, was for peace; and when Lord Tynemouth, good-humouredly fastening upon his arm, paraded him among the groups of guests to the archery-ground and new pheasantries, he felt that his cause was supported by the heads of the family.

He met Lady Shoreham with cordiality; and was only grieved to perceive, from a certain flush on her cheek and unquiet wandering of the eye, that she was experiencing great uneasiness on account of her son.

George Holloway kept following her about to tell her that 'Lord and Lady Walmer were inquiring for Lord Shoreham; that Lord and Lady Henry Marston were in the saloon looking after Lord Shoreham; and that the tenants' dinner was about to be served and waiting only for Lord Shoreham.'

Instead of the gratification to her pride she had often anticipated of presenting to these Kentish dignitaries individually, and to the county collectively, her handsome son, accomplished into a finished gentleman by foreign travel and British scholarship, she stood alone upon her solitary lawn; while the young hero, in whose honour the bells were ringing and the squibs squibbing, was locked up in the billiard-room with Gus and the Parson, and one or two of their St. James's Street especials.

Meanwhile, poor Margaret Barnsley was of neither the breakfast-party nor the archery. Confined to her bed by an overpowering headache she revolved again and again her mortifications of the preceding night. Neither the ringing of the village bells, nor the salvos of the field battery erected in the park, nor rumbling of carriages, nor clanging of military bands, nor swearing of footmen, nor slamming of doors, nor stir and hum of the gathering multitude, could supersede the recollected tone of disdain in which the words 'Old Barnsley' and 'the attorney's daughter' had been uttered by Lord Shoreham. What was the meaning of this? Her father was a man of fortune,—of character. In what was he inferior to the Mr. Sullivan, whose name had been pronounced by the young Lord in a manner so much more respectful?

Little as she knew of worldly distinctions, Margaret could not but discern the truth,—that she was living among people of a rank superior to her own, and that Lord Shoreham regarded the daughters of Lord Tynemouth and the niece of Lord Brereton in a different light from the daughter of Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill;—an attorney bred, and born of parents, the existence of whose progenitors was proved only by the immutable laws of physiological nature!

Such, then, were the opinions and usages of society! Margaret did not rebel,—she did not even murmur. It was scarcely possible to form a lower estimate than she had ever

done of her personal claims to consideration. But she was sorry her father and Miss Winston had not made her more fully aware of the conventions of polished life, and spared her the humiliation of being overthrown from a false position.

To a man first wakening to the consciousness of obscurity of birth, a thousand ladders present themselves by which to climb up into light and distinction. He may fight or write himself into a name; and the very peerage itself is open to those who approach through the paths of legislative or military eminence.

But a woman has only one mode of achieving greatness,—a mode how infinitely little! She must *marry for rank;* and more than one girl of sensitive temper and an ambitious spirit has been taunted by such affronts as that under which Barnsley's daughter was smarting, into flinging away her youth, beauty, and fortune upon such things as an Alfred or Augustus Drewe!

There was no such fear, however, for Margaret. All she felt was double gratitude for the distinctions she had received from Mrs. Sullivan, Helen, and Edward, and the kindness recently shown her by the Drewes and Devereuxs. She could easily refrain from those circles where her inferiority might provoke humiliation. She had her own sphere—an honourable and a useful one—where it would depend upon herself to be happy. She only wished herself away from Wynnex,—back at unpretending Stokeshill,—back with the quiet governess, who, if she exerted herself little to give her pleasure, at least had never given her a moment's pain. Margaret felt that in the fresh air of her own secluded flower-garden she could soon get rid of her headache. At the Abbey there was no remedy but Godfrey's salts and a darkened chamber.

At length, late in the afternoon, came Lady Shoreham's confidential maid, with my lady's regards, and hopes that Miss Barnsley was better, a splendid ball-dress, and garland of French flowers, exactly like those to be worn by her own daughters; and an offer that the young ladies' Parisian lady of the bed-chamber should officiate at her toilet.

It was in vain Margaret protested that to rise and dress was impossible. 'La! Miss, my lady would be so terribly

disappointed!' seemed to the waiting-woman a sufficient plea to raise the dead.

Margaret was still debating, when a low knock was heard at her chamber door; and her father, preceded by her own maid Gladstone, made his appearance. Margaret's pale cheeks became flushed as she half rose from her pillow with gratitude, to think that papa should have been at the trouble to find her out in all the confusion of the day; but when, on seeing Lady Shoreham's beautiful and considerate presents, he decided that she must rise and attempt to do them honour, she almost wished he had missed his way to her apartment.

The decree, however, had gone forth; and as soon as he quitted her, the dutiful daughter arose, and with a heavy sigh commenced the preparations for her toilet. A set of opals and diamonds substituted by her father for the promised pearls, did not dazzle her into better spirits; nor could even the raptures into which the French maid was thrown by the beauty of the long black silken hair she was deputed to arrange, divert her from her cares. Papa had insisted upon her trying to look her best, and her best she was trying to look. But though surprised (when, obeying the orders of the *soubrette*, she cast a look on the swing-glass) to see the alteration produced in her appearance by the first fashionable costume in which she had ever figured,—by the lustre of the satin and blonde, the close-fitting elegance of the waist, the lustre of her jewels, the delicacy of her flowers,—Margaret did not so much as notice the brilliancy imparted to her countenance by the flush of fever, or the exquisite contrast between her raven hair and the dead and pearly whiteness of her skin. The notion that she was beautiful had never entered her mind. The French maid was the first person who had ever told her so; and the French maid appeared to her inexperienced judgment something between a mad woman and a monkey.

The second bell rang. The band of the Cinque Ports Militia had long been clanging in the great hall with cymbals (anything but 'tinkling') the gastronomic hymn of 'Oh! the roast beef of Old England;' and Margaret, after divers false starts from the dressing-room into the corridor, at length gained courage to glide rustling down the stairs,

the balustrades of which were adorned with garlands of laurel and china roses.

She passed the guards, the gate, the hall,

with panting bosom and compressed lips, threaded the long array of servants waiting at the door of the saloon; and the butler, somewhat elated by the twenty-one years' old October, broached in honour of the day, gave out the name of 'Miss Barnsley' in a tone considerably louder than became his accustomed breeding. Margaret heartily wished herself back in her own room when she found that the company was pairing off in couples to the dining-room;—the first twenty of which were already out of sight, and among them, all her friends.

Lucilla and Mary, indeed, remained with the six or eight young ladies still to be led out. But they were laughing and chatting with Brereton, Carmichael, and several strange young men; and Margaret stood alone in the group of men nearest the door.

At last, it was *her* turn to go. The murmur of inquiry excited by her extreme beauty over-awed her. She dared not stir alone across the room. She wanted only courage to retrace her steps, and run away. Her cheeks were flushed of deepest crimson,—her eyes fixed on the floor. Every one seemed waiting for her to move; when a friendly arm silently presented itself, and without waiting to see from whence it came, Margaret accepted it, and hurried on after the rest.

The noise of the room into which they passed, and the blazing lights with which it was illuminated, seemed to restore her to herself. Not a syllable was uttered by her companion. Having placed her in a vacant seat next to stupid George Holloway (beside whom the wiser maids of Kent were too wary to place themselves), he bowed, and ceding to the pressure of the throng of servants, moved towards the other side of the table to a chair next Helen Sullivan; and Margaret had only leisure to discover that her valiant, though not very courteous knight, was no other than the ugly stranger who had intruded into the library on the day of her arrival at Wynnex, concerning whose mys-

terious disappearance it had never occurred to her to make inquiries.

On the present memorable occasion, Lord Shoreham, complying with his mother's private entreaties, condescended to occupy his fitting post; where he was of course flanked by the two great ladies of the county—the Countess of Walmer and Lady Henry Marston.

Margaret, accustomed to hear these personages so obsequiously spoken of by her father and the Westertonians, was amazed to observe the easy familiarity with which they were treated by their host. There was very little difference between the tone in which he addressed them, and the flippancy of his manner to herself the preceding night; and in spite of his good looks and good humour, she decided him to be the most unlordly young gentleman with whom she had ever been in company.

Stupid George Holloway, pure, at least, from slang and the vulgarities of club jargon, rose by comparison. Even Helen Sullivan's ill-looking friend, whose countenance, though forbidding, was all intelligence, and whose manners, though ungraceful, were strictly gentlemanly, seemed far better qualified to adorn the annals of the peerage than Lord Shoreham.

CHAPTER XI.

Short leisure was allowed for sitting after dinner; for Lord Shoreham, as by custom established, was to open the tenants' ball, previous to that for which the musicians soon took their place in the orchestra of the painted ball-room.

'Lucky that such a day as this comes but once in our lives!'—cried he aside to his uncles, as he proceeded to the discharge of his duties. 'What up hill work!—By Jove, I'd rather be wheeler in the York heavy!' While Gus and the Parson, in spite of the assurances of the *maître-d'hôtel* that the dinner-room must be cleared to make way for the supper-tables, ordered more claret, took out their cigar-cases, and 'made themselves comfortable.' These proceedings were duly reported to the Viscountess; but offensive as they were to her notions of elegance and decorum, she saw that the

uncles were too positively supported by her son, to render interference safe. Her influence had kept their names out of the old Lord's will; but she saw it would avail nothing to keep their persons out of the young Lord's dining-room. Her task with her son was in fact sufficiently difficult, without the introduction of any such thorny theme of contention. Besides, she wanted him, by way of *amende honorable* to Barnsley, to open the ball with Margaret. Neither Lady Walmer nor Lady Henry had daughters present. The Devereux were, in a sort, at home; and though many of the squires' daughters stood higher in importance than Miss Barnsley, none of them had positive pretensions to precedence such as might not be set aside.

Lord Shoreham objected of course;—it was his cue to object to everything proposed by his mother. 'He was engaged to dance with Flora Devereux!' Lady Shoreham, 'undertook to settle all with her niece.' 'In that case, he should ask old Sullivan's daughter. Miss Sullivan was a fine, thorough-bred creature, with capital paces.' Lady Shoreham had the satisfaction of informing him that Miss Sullivan had been engaged, for a week past, to Sir Ross Carmichael. 'In that case he should not dance at all.'

'But, my dear boy—the thing is unheard of!' remonstrated the too long indulgent mother. 'It will be thought an offence to the county if you do not dance. Pray oblige me by standing up for just *one* dance with Miss Barnsley: *then*, if you choose, you can go and join your uncles."

Still Lord Shoreham grumbled, and still Lady Shoreham entreated; but at length the prospect of buying off his release from the ball, so as to finish the night with a rubber with the two Drewes and Brereton, prevailed. When Barnsley, who was stationed in the ball-room in conversation with Lord Henry Marston, (about obtaining a charter for Denton Bay, a new harbour on the estates of the latter,) was startled by his companion's sudden inquiry—'Who is that lovely creature with whom Lord Shoreham is dancing?'—he had the satisfaction of perceiving all eyes fixed with admiration upon his daughter, little suspecting how repugnantly accepted as a partner by his ungracious ward!

Few of those in the habit of seeing Miss Barnsley in her dull routine of studuous seclusion at Stokeshill, plainly

dressed, and unassumingly mannered,—had anticipated the sensation her beauty was destined to produce. It was immediately set down by two, out of the three hundred guests, that she was engaged to Lord Shoreham; and a great disposition to indulgence prevails towards a pretty girl on the eve of an advantageous marriage. The young ladies, apprehensive of appearing envious, protested that Margaret was all grace and loveliness; the old ones, anxious to pique their daughters for having missed such a match, declared that it was no wonder a girl of such gentle manners and excellent deportment, should make so fine a connection; while the men, really captivated by her delicacy and softness, exclaimed on all sides that she was the prettiest girl who for many a year had done honour to the county of Kent. Barnsley, accustomed to think so little of his daughter, could scarcely believe his eyes and ears: and Lady Shoreham, considering herself sole creatress of Margaret's momentary triumph, began almost to regret the interference which proved the means of throwing her own girls and nieces completely into the shade. In spite of the fashionable airs of her daughters, those of Barnsley and Sullivan were decidedly the belles of the Wynnex ball.

Meanwhile Helen, who was left without a chaperon by Mrs. Sullivan's habits of early retirement, and her pompous father's habit of button-holding the greatest man present,—was compelled to have recourse to her brother for protection; and having retreated for a few minutes into the library, from the heat of the ball-room, she could not forbear reproaching him with his incivility towards her friend Margaret.

'Margaret Barnsley was nearly left to come into dinner alone!' said she, to the contemptuous Brereton. 'She is such a good creature! Do, my dear William, show her, for my sake, a little attention.'

'What would you have more?' replied Brereton. 'Your *protégée* engrosses the honours of the evening.'

'No wonder!—she is so fresh looking—so pretty—Margaret reminds me of a china rose-bud.'

'A girl, with as much character as a sheet of white paper!'

'Remember her age;—seventeen,—totally ignorant of the world.'

'I recollect *you*, Helen, at seventeen—'tis no such mighty length of time ago!' replied her brother; 'and you were never such a yea-nay specimen of young ladyism as that girl of Barnsley's!'

'That girl of Barnsley's!—Yes!—that is the motive which prevents your admitting her perfections. Were she not the daughter of a low-bred father, you would see, at once, that she is worth twenty Miss Drewes, and—'

'A thousandth part of a Helen Sullivan,' said Brereton, gallantly, for he was really proud of his sister.

'Do not think to disarm me with flattery. Consider the advantages Helen Sullivan has had, compared with that girl of Barnsley's! Consider the careless father, the dull governess—'

'The unincidental home—the narrow circumscription of her studies,' continued Brereton. 'Yes all *that* demands indulgence. She has seen nothing and read nothing; has had neither parents nor brother to enlarge her experience and strengthen her character. While you were reading that girl was stitching—eternally stitching—under the eye of the most commonplace dolt that ever miscalculated the doctrine of passive obedience.'

'And what is the consequence? That Helen Sullivan is a self-willed ungovernable girl, who presumes to find fault with her elder brother and keep him prisoner by her side, that she may escape such a partner as George Holloway; while Margaret—all patience—all humility—'

'Carries her insignificance of spirit so far as to refuse, at her father's command, a man she ought to have jumped high as the moon to accept.'

'Margaret?—Margaret Barnsley?—why whom in the world has she ever known intimately enough to refuse?'

'If I tell you, you will never forgive *her*, nor my father *me*.'

'You cannot mean *Edward?*' exclaimed Helen, becoming gradually enlightened. 'No! Margaret cannot have refused Edward Sullivan!'

'With very little ceremony, I assure you! While you and my mother were at St. Leonard's he was always at Stokeshill; and at length felt so sure of her as to persuade my father to write proposals.'

'If Edward felt sure, he deserved to be refused,' said Helen, firmly. 'On the whole, too, Margaret decided wisely. In obtaining the influence of a young and pretty wife over Edward's timid nature, she might have dragged him down to her own level. She is a dear, good girl, but not the person to draw out the retiring disposition of Edward. I am glad she refused him.'

'If my father could but hear you! My father cannot even forgive Ned for having betrayed him into the proposal. My father, who found Barnsley a useful country neighbour, but never could bear him as a man, no longer mentions his name without foaming at the mouth. He is afraid Barnsley will fancy his alliance was courted as a matter of interest—afraid he will fancy his refusal has been a source of mortification to us. I really think my father would go all lengths to annoy him.'

'Do not say so; remember in how unhandsome a light you are placing my father!'

'Remember, rather, what a position we occupy in the county compared with that fellow, Barnsley! Now that the Woodgates are gone, Sullivan of Hawkhurst is the most ancient landed proprietor in this part of Kent. These people at Wynnex would give their coronet to possess such a pedigree. Even Lord Walmer is only of Elizabeth's time.'

'But, after all, what is pedigree?' cried Helen. 'Did it prevent Sir Richard Woodgate from having an execution on his property?'

'I only wish it had prevented his selling Stokeshill till my uncle's death placed me in a position to make the purchase,' answered her brother. 'There is no end to the mischief of having such people as the Barnsleys introduced into a respectable neighbourhood. See,—only in the second generation, it has all but produced an alliance between us and them! If one could but get Barnsley to sell the place, with a little help from my father, I might compass it, and get rid of my cursed Irish property.'

'Compass it rather by marrying my pretty, docile friend,' cried Helen, jokingly, 'and *then* you might keep both.'

'Marry that fellow, Barnsley's daughter? Thank you! The proverb says that *beau sang ne ment jamais*;—but base blood is equally a truth-teller. The girl is just bearable

now, under the extenuating circumstances of youth and prettiness; but rely upon it the cloven foot will one day start out. As a married woman she will grow mean and vulgar;—the pettifogging spirit will betray itself.'

'Well! do not marry one of the Drewes, and I will let you off from marrying Margaret,' said his sister with a smile.

'I have no thoughts of marrying any one at present,' replied Mr. Brereton, consequentially. 'I saw a good deal of the Drewes last winter at Paris, and last spring in town. There was the connecting link of country neighbourship to draw us together; and Shoreham and I, you know, belong to the same clubs.'

'Rely upon it Lady Shoreham supposes you to be paying your addresses to her daughter.'

'So have many women, and found out too late that they were mistaken! If a man of family like myself,—independent—having property, happens to dance twice with a girl, the family insist that he is paying her his addresses; while, after a younger brother like poor Ned has actually proposed, they persist in never having seen or understood a word of the matter! But by Jove! here is that fellow Barnsley making his way towards us.'

'Come into the ball-room,' said Helen, rising, 'I am quite cool and rested now.'

'I can't make out Barnsley,' continued Brereton, as they bent their way together out of the library to avoid him. 'For the last fortnight he has been pumping me about my intention of standing for Westerton. Why the deuce should he fancy *I* wanted to stand for Westerton?—Are there no boroughs to be had in England or Ireland but Westerton? The brute is so *borné!* Parliament is his monomania,—just as the peerage is that of your one-idead ass of an admirer, George Holloway.'

'Hush!' interrupted his sister; 'they are both within hearing.'

CHAPTER XII.

After all the varying emotions of that day of days, Barnsley began to feel that (pending the anticipated day of his return for the ancient and loyal borough of Westerton) it was the proudest of his life. The young Lord of Wynnex Abbey had opened the ball with his daughter, and the whole county applauded his choice; but even that satisfaction was now obliterated. In the very teeth of old Sullivan, the Earl of Walmer had presented him as his friend Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill to Lord Henry Marston, as they all stood together talking poor-laws with Lord Tynemouth. Lord Walmer had expressed himself anxious for Barnsley's opinion on the Dover railroad, ere he made an investment; while Lord Henry was no less eager to consult him concerning the dieting of the Westerton House of Industry, one of the pattern poor-houses of the county. Was it wonderful that under such flattering circumstances he should remain unobservant of Margaret's escape from the ball-room, or oblivious of her morning's head-ache?

Old Holloway too, on the eve of his Salopian journey, had a thousand duties to charge upon the back of his brother magistrate. There were poachers to be recommended to the utmost rigour of the law; and an old half-doting woman, once a servant in the family, to be let off easy for stealing turnips in a field. As the sapient George was included in the family caravan, the Squire even requested his faithful coadjutor to look in at Withamstead in the course of his morning rides, at some new drains in progress near the house; and added a hint of the laziness of the fellows employed in re-tiling the gardener's house, who, having been recommended by Barnsley for the job, his interference seemed to be a mere matter of justice.

Even Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge, one of the pests of Barnsley's existence, contributed on this occasion to his satisfaction. Punching him in the side just as Holloway relinquished his button, the wag of Westerton whispered jocosely:

'Why is Miss Margaret Barnsley likely to become a woman of letters?—Do you give it up?—Because she's going to Win X.'

'Pshaw! you are really too bad,' replied Barnsley, vexed to perceive that Closeman's apostrophe had been overheard by a very tall, sallow, haughty-looking young man, who had sat by Miss Sullivan during dinner and held her in animated conversation at other moments of the evening.

'Pray, who is that tall gentleman?' inquired Barnsley of the Westerton banker, as the lofty stranger passed on with a sneer.

'Don't you really know?'

'If I did, why should I ask you?'

'Well, then, between ourselves,—if you won't mention it to anybody—he is the Board of longitude.'

'Closeman, you are really too bad!'

'I ask your pardon—I meant the Dungeness light-house.'

'Now, my dear Closeman!'

'Joke for joke, my dear fellow! You ask me whom he is, when I saw your own daughter go in with him to-day to dinner, cheek by jowl, as familiarly as the Siamese twins.'

The eyes of Barnsley still pursued the retreating stranger; for he now noticed with surprise that every Westertonian head bent down reverentially in salutation as he passed. Dobbs ducked, while Mrs. Holdfast curtsied with never-ending iteration, like the bobbing lady at the wax-work. Here and there, the stranger paused condescendingly with inquiries after catarrhs, rheumatisms, puppy-dogs, and parrots; and to Mrs. Dobbs, who with her face resplendent with smiles awaited his approach, his address was of more than royal affability. Barnsley was completely puzzled! He knew every soul in the neighbourhood; nay, from its narrow limitation, found himself acquainted with the very acquaintanceships of the Dobbses and Squillses. It was part of his vocation to know and play upon the stops of Westerton; to be aware that Mr. Dobbs had an extensive cousinship among the dissenters, and that Mrs. Squills rejoiced in relations well to do in the West India connection; the interests of his election demanded this vast diffusion of knowledge.

But of the haughty stranger, the object of the jocose Closeman's bad jokes,—at which his electioneering interests also compelled him to get up a laugh—he knew no more

than of his own grandfather. Lord Henry had a word for the young man as he went by; Lord Walmer one of those courtier-like bows, redolent of the Chesterfieldian odour of aristocratic sanctity now all but evaporated from the face of the land; and, above all, old Sullivan, the formal Sullivan, stiff as a baronial effigy on a tomb in Westminster Abbey, relaxed from his rigidity, and with a stony smile perpetrated something almost amounting to a jest with the illustrious stranger.

'I think you dance the supper dances with Mary? Supper will be announced in half an hour,' said Lady Shoreham, hurrying at that moment towards Sullivan and the great unknown. 'You will find my daughter with Lady Walmer, near the orchestra.'

And away she went again, leaving no time for Barnsley's intended interrogations. But his curiosity was now excited to the utmost, and seizing the sleeve of Dobbs, he would fain for once have placed the lawyer's information under contribution; while Dobbs, who having heard their lady hostess' announcement respecting supper, was impelled towards the dining-room by a forty-horse power of gluttony, exclaimed to Barnsley as he pushed on, 'By-and-by, my dear sir, I am at your service. At present I am engaged to take in Mrs. Closeman to supper.'

Poor Barnsley! The god of knowledge seemed, like Coleridge's god of love, to clap his wings upon the shore, mocking the esquire of Stokeshill as he sailed onwards on the stream of time; and as the black knight had now disappeared with the current of human heads pouring out of the ball-room towards the savoury hall, he had no longer the means of pointing out the object of his curiosity. He was desperate, as well as defeated; for by one of those intuitive warnings that often occur in novels, and occasionally in real life, he felt by intuition like the fat nun Catherine on first beholding the fat monk Luther, that the master of his destinies was before him!

It suddenly occurred to him that if, as Closeman asserted, his daughter had been led in to dinner by the strange gentleman, she must be at least cognisant of his name; and thus reminded of Margaret's existence, away he went in search of her. But neither in gallery, library, nor ball-

room, was Margaret to be heard of. Lady Shoreham was too busy marshalling her guests to supper to be interrupted; but Mr. Squills, who entertained a professional interest in the subject, informed him that, having noticed Miss Barnsley looking extremely pale and indisposed, he had recommended her to retire to rest.

As soon as the dispatch of supper would allow, Barnsley, accordingly proceeded, for the second time that day or for the last half-dozen years, to Margaret's bed-side, waking her from a heavy sleep which not all the tumult of the house could interrupt, to inquire,—'How are you now, my dear?—Pray, what is the name of the gentleman with whom you went in to dinner?'

'I—I, believe I am better,' faltered poor Margaret, pressing her hand to her forehead. 'The gentleman's name, papa?—I cannot tell you. He gave me his arm, because I was going in alone. I never saw him but once before, for a moment, in the library here.'

'You know nothing of him, then?'

'Nothing whatever. But I have some idea that he is a friend of the Sullivan's, and has been staying lately at Hawkhurst.'

'Indeed!—well, good night, my dear. You will be better to-morrow; try to get a good night's rest.' And closing the door into her dressing-room as loudly as if to ascertain the solidity of the foundations of Wynnex Abbey, he went back to the scene of festivity; reaching the great hall in time to see his perplexer wrapt in his cloak, stand bowing at the open door in reply to Mrs. Dobbs' offer of setting him down.

'Your carriage is open, Sir, and you are heated with dancing,' said the polite old lady. 'We shall pass the Winchelsea Arms. Pray, allow me the honour of putting you down.'

But Barnsley's attention was instantly withdrawn from all idle conjectures. He was sent for, as usual, by Lady Shoreham whenever she was in a dilemma. There was confusion in the state of Denmark! The fire-works were not the only source of explosion in honour of the young Lord's birthday. The discretion of the tenantry appeared overflooded by the spring-tide of October that had set in;—after drinking, had come fighting,—and after fighting, the

constables. Two of the most uproarious of his Lordship's health-drinkers were in the cage, and their victim in the infirmary; even the good order of the ball in the steward's room had been interrupted by the unauthorised intrusion of Parson Drewe; who, after his third bottle of claret, had insisted upon drinking a glass of punch with Mrs. Timmins, of the Market Place, with an audacity of assiduity by which the complexion of her husband the brazier, was converted to the hue of one of his own copper saucepans!

'Do, my dear Sir,' said the agitated Lady Shoreham, 'exert your usual kindness to get these unpleasant matters settled for me. I cannot persuade Shoreham to leave his rubber; and, even if I could, he knows nothing of the people here, and has at present no influence over them.'

It needed only a hint like this to carry Barnsley to the field of action; whence the parson and his gin-punch had been removed to bed, and the belligerents to durance vile. He poured oil upon the billows of Mr. and Mrs. Timmins; —he shook his head with the constables, and hands with the steward; ending all with a charge to the subordinates in the court-yard, peculiarly characteristic of the magisterial wisdom of Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill Place.

To Stokeshill Place, meanwhile, after explanations that set poor Lady Shoreham's mind at ease, Mr. Barnsley hastened his return. Having business to transact at the town-hall of Westerton early on the following morning, he had ordered his carriage immediately after supper; but perplexed by a certain or uncertain number of glasses of iced champagne, and a red reflection on the sky caused by the beacons and bonfires still smouldering on the hills, he began to fear he had overstayed himself, and that morning was already breaking.

But no!—some hours of rest were still before him; and though his eyes smarted and his brows ached when he woke at Stokeshill on the morrow, sufficiently to excuse his careless replies to the questions concerning Margaret's appearance and deportment, hazarded at breakfast by Miss Winston, he contrived to be on horseback betimes, and sniffing his way through the hop market at Westerton, by eleven of the clock.

The gleam of certain brazen skillets dangling before the

door of a house in the market-place, reminded Barnsley, as he passed the hardwareman's shop, that he had promised the night before to give Timmins a call of inquiry after his hysterical lady. Now Richard Timmins was a man by no means to be neglected; the crack orator of the True Blue Club,—the Mirabeau of the Westerton hustings, with logic as luminous as his plated candlesticks, and sonorous as his own brass warming-pans. Timmins was weighing an ounce of tenpenny nails, when his respected customer from Stokeshill hurried in; but, with a knowing jerk of the thumb, he pointed to the back-shop in which, on market days, Missus Timmins did the honours of her currant wine to all visitors of repute. The handle of the glass door yielded to Barnsley's touch; and while with the other hand he removed his hat in deference to the hysterical hardware woman, he saw that Missus Timmins was not alone. Opposite to her in the arm-chair of honour, sat the memorable stranger of the Wynnex ball!

What candidate on earth, but would have smelt a rival candidate, at such a moment, in such a place?

'Pray step in, Mr. Barnsley, Sir,' said the Timmins, pointing to a seat, with a very different air from that with which she was accustomed to receive him. 'Not fatigued, I hope, Sir? Poor affair last night, in my opinion, to have been so much talked of. I expected things in a tiptop style.'

'I fear,' said Barnsley, good naturedly, 'that the impetuosity of Mr. Drewe may have left a disagreeable impression on your mind; but—'

'Bless your 'eart, I was not thinking of that!' said the lady, mincingly; while her dignified visitor disguised a smile by fixing his eyes on two curs in the street snarling over a bone. 'I was thinking, Sir, how different things was done at 'Awkust, when Mr. Sullivan as was, Mr. Brereton as is, came into his fortun'.'

'I can assure you, Madam, that everything was provided on the most liberal scale,' observed Barnsley, rather nettled. 'Fifty cases of champagne; and a hogshead of old port—'

'Bless your 'eart, I was not thinking of *that*!' cried the lady again, 'not but what, betwixt friends, I must say, the 'ams at *our* supper was the worst I ever tasted. But such a sad mixture, Sir! My Lady, I s'pose, is above attending to

them things, or had enough to do with her own company; and what was the consequence?—we really had folks in the steward's room, as was no how fit for our society!—Things can't go on well, Mr. Barnsley, where there's no distinction of classes. For my part, I can't abide low company. At Mrs. Sullivan's, Sir, orders was gin' that no one was to be admitted to the steward's table, but such of the old tradesmen of the family as kept their chay, and had things a little genteel. The *hoy polloy*, as Mr. T. calls 'em, was with the livery sarvants in the hall. But last night, who should I see the first person stuck up next to Mrs. Tomlinson, the housekeeper, like who, but she—but Mrs. Trollope, as keeps an oil and pickle shop in Shoe Lane; whose husband was fut-boy at the Vicarage no such great times ago;—a person belonging to a class as Mr. T. and I is not in the habit of demeaning ourselves to sociate with.'

'I am convinced Lady Shoreham would be greatly concerned did she imagine, Ma'am, that your feelings had been hurt by anything occurring under her roof,' said Barnsley, gravely.

'Why you see, Mr. Barnsley, Sir, as I've just been remarking to Sir 'Enry, here, the neighbourhood ben't by no means what it was. I've heard my mother say, she remembered the time when, except Canterbury and Maidston', th re warn't a genteeler town than Westerton in the county of Kent; thirteen livery footmen, in the gallery, at church of a Sunday; and reg'lar routs and card parties all winter long. And now, Sir, what becomes of them widder ladies and single ladies, as used to settle here?—why they sets up at Brighton or Hastings!—While, as to the families roundabouts, saving and excepting one or two old 'uns, such as the Sullivans of 'Awkust—'

But poor Barnsley was spared an harangue such as scarcely even electioneering patience could have supported; his name being loudly called on from the shop, by his friend Closeman, who at length thrust his head into the fusty boudoir of the dainty Mrs. Timmins.

'Why Barnsley! what are you about?—Out of the frying-pan into the fire, eh?—and a fire with such a deuced number of irons in it, eh?—Come, come, we've been waiting for you these ten minutes at the town-hall.'

And dragging Barnsley through the shop, without giving him time for so much as a last glance at the perplexing Sir Henry, he was soon Kentishly deep in the jargon of the hop-pocket with the growers who stood wrangling together in the market-place.

The business to be dispatched at the Town-hall, which regarded a defaulter in a branch of the turnpike trust, was productive, like most similar discussions in a squirearchal synod, of much heat, much irritation, much recrimination, and as little rational purpose as can be conveniently imagined. After talking for four hours, and acting at last as if they had not talked for one, Barnsley found himself at liberty to remount his favourite mare, ride off to Withamstead, and consult old Holloway, who was to depart for the metropolis on the morrow, concerning some point of legal etiquette relative to the guardianship affairs at Wynnex; but it was six o'clock before he entered once more the lodge-gates of his own particular domain. He had declined dining at the Abbey under the equivocal aspect of Lord Shoreham's conduct; and it was not till the following day that the Stokeshill carriage was to be sent to bring home Margaret.

Great, therefore, was Barnsley's surprise on entering the stable-yard, where it was his practice to alight when unaccompanied, to see a servant in the Drewe livery, and a smoking hack which he recognised as belonging to the Abbey. As he gave his horse to the groom, a letter was placed in his hands; which, having hastily opened, he perused on his way into the house.

'Dear Sir, 'Wynnex Abbey, Thursday.

'I am under the painful necessity of requesting that you will hasten hither as soon as possible. Miss Barnsley having passed a very restless night, I thought it right she should see Squills this morning, who is in daily attendance at the Abbey. He owned to me, at once, that there was a tendency to sore throat which he thought alarming; and this afternoon, does not hesitate to affirm, that my young friend's illness is scarlet fever, and I fear of a malignant kind. The dear girl is in a high fever, and can scarcely speak to be intelligible.

'Under these circumstances, my dear Sir, Miss Barnsley's

nearest relative being at hand to watch over her welfare, I consider it my duty to my own family to remove my daughters without delay out of the reach of infection; and my brother and nieces are setting off with us for Ramsgate, where we shall sleep to-night. Shoreham, who has had the scarlet fever, remains with his uncles at the Abbey; but they will offer no disturbance to the dear invalid, and I trust you will bring Miss Winston, and contrive to make your daughter as comfortable at Wynnex till her recovery, as in your own commodious mansion.

'Pray let me have a line from you to-morrow, addressed to the Royal Hotel, Ramsgate, and believe me ever, dear Sir,

'Most faithfully, your obliged,
'L. Shoreham.'

For a moment, Barnsley stood aghast. The thought of Margaret, in danger and already abandoned at Wynnex Abbey, touched even his callous heart. She might die,—his child,—his sole heiress;—she, for whose sake he had been amassing riches, and storing up his personal consideration; she whom, but the night before, his busy fancy had already saluted Lady Viscountess Shoreham! He thought less of the docile child—the mild companion—than of the inheritress of Stokeshill and its honours.

Miss Winston was instantly summoned, and desired to hurry her preparations during the time the carriage was getting ready; while Barnsley, who in the midst of his parental woes could not forget that he had eaten nothing, and talked much since an early breakfast, sat down to his cod and oyster sauce, calling for Chili vinegar and Harvey, as if his mind were perfectly at ease.

The poor governess, loving her pupil as much as it was in her nature to love, was speechless, meanwhile, with anxiety! During her whole attendance on Margaret, scarcely a day's indisposition had intervened; and her terrors rose in proportion to the novelty of the case. She was ready for departure long before the coachman, and very long before Barnsley; who, once in process of restoring exhausted nature, did not seem inclined to abridge himself of his slice of pheasant, his angle of apple pie, or even a dig of Stilton. To watch him

emptying his last glass of port, and leisurely picking his teeth, no one would have supposed that the carriage was at the door to convey him to a dying daughter.

In the course of their drive from Stokeshill to the Abbey, Barnsley replied without reserve to the interrogations of the poor terrified governess, concerning the commencement and progress of Margaret's illness. He even avowed, in the excitement of the moment, the speculations to which the evident admiration of Lord Shoreham had given rise; and under the cheering influence of his glass or two of port, admitted a hope that the Viscount's pertinacity in remaining at the Abbey during her illness, might betoken favourably for the realisation of his projects.

But this conjecture was lost on Miss Winston; she seemed to assign as little importance to Barnsley's matrimonial scheme, as if she had been hid behind the curtain when Lord Shoreham received from his mother the first intelligence that Margaret was attacked with the scarlet fever.

'Well,—send her home, then,—it is no great distance to Stokeshill!' was his reply, chalking his cue, without interrupting his game of billiards.

'Miss Barnsley is much too ill to be moved.'

'The devil she is!' cried his lordship, attempting a cannon.

'So, after making your house his own for the last ten years, the attorney is going to convert it into his family hospital!' sneered Augustus Drewe, who was officiating as marker.

'Well, never mind!—The girl *might* have had the small pox,' resumed Lord Shoreham. 'I've had the scarlet fever—I don't care for the scarlet fever!'

'But you surely will not think of remaining at the Abbey?' interrupted his mother. 'We are all off immediately for Ramsgate.'

'I detest Ramsgate!—The air is so deuced keen that I once ate a brood of chickens for breakfast!'—observed Gus, in a low tone, as if talking to himself.

'Of course you will accompany us?' observed the Viscountess, addressing her son.

'Not I, indeed!—I have promised myself and my uncles a fortnight's shooting at Wynnex. I would not stir an inch, if the plague were in the house.'

'And so it is!' murmured the honourable marker.

'But your sisters and I will be alone?' resumed Lady Shoreham.

'Take Brereton then;—I make you a present of Brereton. Brereton is too good a shot for me to wish to keep him at Wynnex. We shall get through our dummy whist very well without him. Take Brereton!'

Lady Shoreham saw that all she had to do was to submit. Seriously alarmed for her daughters, her chief desire was to get them out of the house. She had not even leisure for remonstrance.

'Good bye, mother—good bye, Flora,—good bye, girls!'—said Lord Shoreham, as they re-appeared in their shawls and bonnets, on the eve of departure. 'Amuse yourselves at Ramsgate; and recommend Miss Margery Barnsley to get well as soon as convenient. I have got all Crockford's coming down to me for the first day's hunting; and it would hardly be decorous to honour a young lady's wake with a view-halloo!—I should strongly recommend her to cut the apothecary and her stick without delay—Gus! mark fifteen!'

CHAPTER XIII.

In process of press, the County Chronicle announced in two flaming columns the particulars of the Wynnex fête,—from the number of guns and rockets discharged in the park, to the number of marabout feathers in Mrs. Dobbs' bonnet. Stereotyped phrases inseparable from such occasions, of 'diamonds whose lustre was only to be surpassed by the eyes of the lovely wearer,' and indefatigable dancers, 'tripping it on the light fantastic toe, till the rosy morn,' &c. &c., were duly read and laughed at, from one end of the county to the other—from Deal to Dartford.

One paragraph, however, connected with the recital, was considered no laughing matter. When the county of Kent saw it written down in malice, that the 'ball was opened by the young and noble proprietor of Wynnex and the only daughter of his worthy guardian, the lovely heiress of Stokeshill Place,' it felt half prepared for the plausible announcement that appeared on the morrow, of—'We learn that a matrimonial alliance is on the *tapis* between the Right Hon. Vis-

count S——, and the lovely and accomplished Miss B——,' —a mystery cavalierly expounded by the London evening papers into—'Lord Shoreham is about to receive the hand of Miss Barnsley, a Kentish heiress.'

This they took seriously enough. The Walmers, Marstons, and Fitzgeralds, shook their heads, and thought it a pity the young man had not formed a better connexion; while the subordinate coteries, more envious of Margaret and her father than careful to preserve his lordship's purity of caste, entered into further particulars. Some thought Barnsley's conduct scandalous; others, who had been warned off the premises of Wynnex for poaching, had always guessed what the fellow was at; while one called him an upstart,—a second a humbug, and a third (the third cousin of a Welsh baronet) whispered that she had been credibly informed Mr. Barnsley's sister was married to a 'wholesale linen draper in Fleet-street.' Poor Barnsley, in short, was that day more roughly canvassed in the county than he had been during the whole twenty years of his residence at Stokeshill.

But, after all this heat and excitement,

The third day came a frost—a chilling frost.

Three days after the Wynnex celebration, there appeared—

'We regret extremely to state that the festivities consequent upon Viscount Shoreham's attainment of his majority, have been interrupted by the appearance of malignant scarlet fever at Wynnex Abbey; and that the daughter of Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill, one of the brightest ornaments of the recent gala, lies there without hope of recovery.'

Here was oil for the waves! Here was an appeal to the sympathies of a soft-hearted public! Young, rich, beautiful, on the eve of marriage with a charming young nobleman,—*who* could withhold their pity from the gentle Margaret?

From Westerton, where she was known and liked, to Canterbury and Maidstone, where she was only guessed about, every body had a 'poor thing!' to bestow upon the dying girl. The serious moralized,—the gay grew serious. Not a guest of the Wynnex ball, but had noticed and admired the sweet partner of the young hero of the day; but one and all now discovered that they had never before been *so* struck, *so* fascinated;—that they had discerned something angelic in

the soft humility of her air;—that she bore the impress of peculiar interest said to be attached to those predestined to an early death. Poor Margaret was the idol of the whole county. Had Sir Edward Knatchbull or one of his coadjutors been gathered just then to his forefathers, the name of Barnsley might almost have offered itself in succession for the representation of Kent!

The County Chronicle, meanwhile, as if conscious of the interest it had created, kept up the sensibilities of its subscribers by further paragraphs.

'Viscountess Shoreham and the Hon. Misses Drewe, with the Earl of Tynemouth and his daughters, arrived on Friday night at the Royal Hotel, Ramsgate. The young Viscount remains at Wynnex Abbey, with the family of his intended bride, in unremitting attendance on this lovely and unfortunate young lady.'

The day following, the lovely and unfortunate young lady was announced (though still in imminent danger) to be 'slightly amended.'

But this announcement was only one among a thousand inventions to which the unlucky illness of poor Margaret gave rise. She was not even 'slightly amended.' Both Squills and the London physician, sent for at his request, pronounced her condition to be hopeless. Barnsley stationed himself, from morning till night, in an adjoining room, forgetting that there existed such a thing in the civilised world as a Stock Exchange, a court of law, or a hop market; while poor Miss Winston contrived to move like an automaton in the discharge of her attendance on the sick chamber,—her faculties thoroughly overpowered by the heaviness of her affliction.

Margaret lay insensible to the sudden sympathies she had excited,—unconscious that all Kent sorrowed for her,—for *her* the obscure, unseen, unknown, Margaret Barnsley;—or that the father to whom she had instinctively devoted the fervour of her innate filial piety, was repaying it with a tardy tribute of tenderness.

What momentous lessons had she not been fated to acquire during her short visit to Wynnex! First,—that the love which had induced Edward Sullivan to amble in the green lanes by her side was a passion by which hearts are

broken, and to which lives are sacrificed:—next, that a man may be rich, intelligent, virtuous, yet a mark of contempt for certain orders of society;—lastly, that at seventeen, in the prime of youth and enjoyment, a Christian soul may be summoned to render up its account to the judgment-seat of God!

It was this last consciousness that sat heavily upon her gradually-awakening faculties, when, after many days of insensibility, she became once more sensitive to pain, and accessible to reflection. It was only on a restoration to life that she felt herself to be dying; her first perceptions being excited by the sight of two female figures standing within her darkened curtains, one of whom whispered in firm but silvery accents to the other, that all was not yet hopeless.

'No human being can appreciate what I should have to suffer under such a bereavement!' faltered, in reply, the softened voice of the governess. 'In earlier years I loved nothing but her mother,—and she grew up only to be taken from me! Since then, I have devoted every moment of my life to the child she left behind; and behold! she, too, is going,—and I shall be alone.'

To such an apostrophe, even Helen Sullivan had nothing to reply! But Margaret, deeply penetrated by the affection of which she had been unconsciously the object, found strength to extend her burning hand towards the withered and trembling one resting upon her pillow, and drawing it towards her lips, imprinted a kiss of gratitude which thrilled through the frame of the poor governess, as though bestowed by one uprising from the tomb.

'She is sensible!—my child is saved!' faltered the good woman, bending her knees beside the bed, with words of fervent thanksgiving.

'Do not agitate her!' said Helen, surprised to find herself reproving emotions which, for the first time for fifty years, were breaking bounds. 'Compose yourself, my dear madam. Margaret, do you feel better?—Are you in pain?—are you thirsty?'

And it was a welcome task to Helen to bear to Barnsley the tidings of his daughter's amendment, ere she hurried back to Mrs. Sullivan, who was waiting in the carriage at the gate.

But Margaret, though amending, was still in a precarious state. A change of weather,—an accession of feeling,—might shake the leaves from the frail and delicate flower, and strew them withering upon the earth.

Miss Winston sat by the bedside, with her eyes strained, to watch through the dim and uncertain light, every change upon the countenance of her nursling. Unaccustomed to exercise her imagination, she now began to ponder in the watches and darkness of the night upon the mysterious fortunes of 'Mary,' and Mary's daughter. She had not been present at the death-bed of Mrs. Barnsley; but fancied that just as Margaret appeared inanimate before her, her mother must have looked in death. The resemblance between the two was, at all times, striking. Were their fortunes, alas! to prove thus sadly similar?

Meanwhile, whenever Margaret was able to pronounce a few articulate words, she tried to make them words of comfort to the disconsolate woman attending upon her; and at the close of nine days' incessant watching all went well. Miss Winston was enabled to say, 'God be thanked!' and Barnsley to observe,—'To-morrow I shall be able to ride over to Stokeshill. Everything there must be at sixes and sevens,' for Margaret was pronounced to have surmounted the crisis of her disorder.

But with the sweets of that happy turn of events, came bitterness to Barnsley. Even the blindest of men of business (next to lovers the blindest of the human race), must have perceived that, since the commencement of her illness, his hopes and the County Chronicle had been deceived; and that the young viscount had no more thoughts of 'leading her to the hymeneal altar,' than of marrying his dairy-maid. Instead of 'a matrimonial alliance on the *tapis*,' the only *tapis* just then claiming Lord Shoreham's attention, was that of his new billiard-table.

But it was not even *this* conviction that added such strange contraction to the brows of Barnsley, as he sat by the fire-side of his daughter's dressing-room, on returning to the Abbey after dining at Stokeshill on the first day of her convalescene.

A letter, lying on his desk at home from old Holloway, had acquainted him that, in consequence of an understand-

ing with ministers, his new peerage would be gazetted on the Saturday ensuing, and a new writ taken out for the borough of Westerton.

In pursuance of this hint, Barnsley had stopped at the door of his friend Dobbs on his way back to Wynnex; and found, actually issuing from its brass-plated portal, his enemy Giles Hawkins of Longlands Farm, accompanied by no less a personage than the mysterious 'Sir Henry,' who, for the last week, had suffered an eclipse in his mind.

'You have had one of my Stokeshill neighbours with you, I perceive,' said Barnsley, trying to address Dobbs junior in a cheerful voice, as he entered; 'and at ex-official hours, too. Nothing has happened at Longlands to bring him here so late?'—

'I might almost reciprocate the question with regard to Wynnex Abbey?'—replied Dobbs junior, facetiously. 'But Miss Barnsley, I am happy to find, is recovering.'

'Much better, thank you.'

'With respect to Sir Henry Woodgate,' continued Dobbs, in a more confidential tone, 'we have had him here, as you may suppose, at all hours, since our respected friend Mr. Holloway's elevation to the peerage transpired at Westerton.'

'Woodgate!—Why, what has Sir Henry Woodgate to do with Holloway?'—

'With Holloway, nothing;—with Westerton, much. His ancestors, as you well know, were among the earliest benefactors of the borough. Touty's meadows (the best thing belonging to the Grammar School) were originally conferred on the foundation by Sir Ranulph de Woodgate.'

'Yes, yes,—I know—I am aware. But what signifies *that* to this young man?—Does he want to recover them back again?'

'The thing will make a clap-trap for Dick Timmins on the hustings.'

'The hustings!—Timmins!'—cried Barnsley, aghast.

'The brazier will work *con amore*, on the present occasion. Timmins will be worth listening to. His wife, you know, Sir, was daughter to the favourite waiting-maid of the last Lady Woodgate.'

'Am I to understand,' said Barnsley, turning deathly pale,

'that Sir Henry Woodgate is going to stand for Westerton, and to be proposed by Timmins the brazier?'

'Proposed by his relation, Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst, my dear Sir,' said Dobbs, setting him right; 'or rather, I should say, put forward by his relation Mr. Sullivan, and proposed (for form's sake) by his friend Lord Henry Marston. But all this cannot be news to *you*, Mr. Barnsley.'

'Contest the election with me!'—faltered Barnsley.

'With *you*?—Why, my dear Sir, you surely do not mean to stand?' said Dobbs, incredulously. 'I was aware that such a project had been vaguely in your thoughts. But you never formally canvassed us, or——'

'I had Holloway's promise to give me timely warning,—I had not the slightest notion of an opposition,—I considered myself virtually secure.'

'Ah! *virtually* secure!' said the lawyer, with a significant emphasis.

'Do you mean, that you think my chance is now doubtful?'—

'Do *you* mean that, if Sir Henry starts, you have any idea of asking for a poll?'

'Not ask for a poll!—Not find courage to reap the harvest I have been sowing for the last twenty years at Westerton?'

'My dear Sir!' resumed Dobbs, in a low voice, as if to expostulate mildly with the infatuation of a madman, 'I speak to you as a friend. You will have to contend against the influence of one of the most ancient names in the county of Kent.'

'And pray where was the influence of that ancient name, in the year 1796; when Richard Woodgate polled only 36,—and—'

'Times and opinions are altered. The Woodgates were then living at Stokeshill,—their distresses and improvidence the theme of general reprobation; but that which was resented as misconduct on the part of old Sir Ralph, is commiserated as the misfortune of his grandson.'

'A young man of five and twenty,—an inexperienced boy!'

'A young man, you must admit, of the most extraordinary promise.'

'Admit!—I know nothing whatever about him.'

'Not in your individual character, perhaps, but as one of

the public!—No young fellow, since Canning, has so distinguished himself at Eton and Oxford. Young Woodgate is one of the first political economists of the day. That last article of his in the Quarterly——'

'It is all up with me!'—reiterated John Barnsley, in a tone of concentrated rage. 'This is Sullivan's doing!'

'And if it were, we must acknowledge that Mr. Sullivan's conduct is only natural. The Woodgates and Sullivans have been neighbours and friends, with occasional intermarriages of the families, for the last four centuries. The grandfather and father of this very rising young man were Mr. Sullivan's friends; and the young man himself was educated and has been travelling in Greece with Mr. Sullivan Brereton. Sir Henry wishes to be in parliament—*ought* to be in parliament. What can be more reasonable than that he should turn his eyes to the county, from a high station in which he is banished only by the prodigality of his progenitors; and where the influence and associations of his name are still predominant?'—

'You speak with warmth, Mr. Dobbs,' said Barnsley, suspecting, and with reason, that the young attorney was already primed for a speech on the hustings.

'Why certainly, as being retained on the occasion by Sir Henry Woodgate.'—

'*Retained!* Why surely, Sir, you must have felt yourself pledged to *me!*'

'Indeed, my dear Sir, you never definitely prepared us to support your interests. We conceived that the return of Sir Henry Woodgate from abroad, must have overthrown the vague projects you were supposed to have been forming; more especially when we found Sir Henry's cause supported by your intimate friends, Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst and my Lord Shoreham, by whom he was first accompanied to our office.'

'You have deceived me, Sir!—Where is your father?' said Barnsley, in heroic dudgeon.

'My father, Sir, is dining at Hawkhurst, with the gentlemen of Sir Henry's committee. But, in reply to the observations that have fallen from you, suffer me to say, Mr. Barnsley, that, on receiving the application of Sir Henry Woodgate's friends, my father waited upon you personally

at Wynnex Abbey, to sound your intentions; when, in consequence, we are to conclude, of your daughter's indisposition, he was refused admittance to your presence. In short, the altered state of things seemed to have your concurrence; and I fancy we have now so clenched it, that opposition would simply bring down mortification upon yourself.'

'That remains to be proved!'—cried the now infuriated Barnsley. 'Though I have been thrown over by my professional adversaries,—misled by the inertness of Holloway, —and—'

'Pardon me, Mr. Barnsley!—I speak from authority in stating that Mr. Holloway has been altogether taken by surprise by the precipitation with which at last his patent has been made out.'

'I am willing to think so. Mr. Holloway is an honest man; I should be sorry to entertain a different opinion of my Lord Withamstead. But, at least, you will not deny that my cause has been undermined by the revengeful spirit of Mr. Sullivan?'—

'Sir Henry Woodgate has certainly been staying at Hawkhurst on and off for the last four weeks. But there was no mystery, nothing underhand in the case. Sir Henry, at the period of the Wynnex ball, resided openly here, at the Winchelsea Arms. You constantly met him, Sir. I myself more than once saw him in your company. My worthy friend Mr. Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge informed me that he actually found you debating together in the back shop of Timmins the brazier; and that, by the deference of your manner towards young Woodgate, you seemed to be supporting his canvass with Mrs. Timmins.'

'I was not even aware of his name!'

'Oh! Mr. Barnsley!'

'I never even heard of Sir Richard Woodgate's decease!—What had *I* to do with the Woodgates? What was the family to *me*, that I should go prying into their affairs and investigating their projects?—For the first ten years, after I purchased Stokeshill, with cash down on the nail and on liberal terms, my life was embittered by the sprouting of thorns, the germs of which they had sown to spring up and perplex me!—At length I got them under:—I subdued, if

I did not root up the evil.—I made the people about me sensible that a living dog was better than a dead lion; that I held in my hands the means of benefiting or crushing them. They came to consider me, at last, master of my own house; they suffered me to have the disposal of my own property. The name of Woodgate ceased to be dinned from morning to night into my ears.'

Dobbs gently pushed a chair towards Barnsley, who was still standing, and whom he had never before beheld in so explosive a mood. But Barnsley did not even notice the conciliatory movement.

'And having thus far succeeded, why was I to go in search of the people, and push my inquiries into the state of their views and finances?—They have been living in Flanders or Germany. How was I to suppose that a branch of the family was fostering up silently, in England, as if for the express purpose of gathering renown and strength to sting me home?—Mr. Sullivan's motives of enmity I perfectly understand. I presumed to consider his younger son, with a paltry thousand pounds per annum, a bad match for my girl, the heiress, first and last, to eight; —yes, Mr. Dobbs, to *eight* thousand a year. So little do I resemble your friends, the Woodgates, that my ignoble blood has permitted me to improve the means which God had given me. My fortune has increased in my hands as fast as theirs diminished. And since this rash young man thinks to make his profit of the animosity between the Hawkhurst family and mine, you may tell him, from me, that did the intended contest reduce John Barnsley to the same penury which forced his own family to sell their over-mortgaged property, he would hazard all on the trial.—Yes! —to the last stick on the estate!'

'The twinkling eyes of Dobbs junior would have warned an orator less excited than Barnsley, that the promise of an expensive contest for the borough was not a particularly appalling menace to its leading attorney.

'You may tell him, that this election,—(a type of the times, Mr. Dobbs, a struggle between feudal influence and moral strength,—I mean the strength of *money*, Sir, the fruit of commercial or professional industry,)—you may tell him, that this election will serve fully to establish me in

that very station in the county, in which it was my happy fortune to supersede him.'

'I will lay before Sir Henry Woodgate any statements with which you may be pleased professionally to entrust me,' said Dobbs, determined that not a syllable of Barnsley's harangue should damp the rising ardour of the Hawkhurst committee; but pray excuse me from repeating grievances. Such an office enters neither into my profession nor my character. You are heated now, my dear Mr. Barnsley, and it would be superfluous to expose to you the interest that the Tory party must naturally feel in strengthening the hands of government with a member in the full vigour of youthful talents, a man who has already given rise to such prodigious expectations, a man whose name carries with it the force of historical associations, a man——'

'I understand your sneer, Sir!' interrupted Barnsley. 'But had you given your attention, Mr. Richard Dobbs, as I have, for the last twenty years, to the dispatch of parliamentary business, you would find that the times are past when oratorical talent afforded a sufficient pass-key into the House of Commons. The House has ceased to be a debating society. The extension of public interests necessitates a more active dispatch of business; while the diffusion of knowledge, the equalization of public instruction, renders what is called talent a drug in the market.'

'I spoke of *genius*, Sir, rather than of *talent*,' smirked the pragmatical Mr. Dobbs; 'and as a professional man myself, I may be permitted to remark that one man of genius is worth his weight in men of business, to a party so responsible as our own. We have pledged ourselves to so much, Mr. Barnsley, that it is only by dazzling the eyes of——'

'I did not come here, Sir, to debate the state of parties, with you!' cried Barnsley, enraged to hear a whippersnapper of young Dobbs's age conjoin himself, by a collective pronoun, with the great authorities of the state. 'I came to require your father's professional services in my election. He has pledged himself elsewhere; it is sufficient. I wish you good night.'

'Perhaps, Sir, you will make an appointment with my father, to confer upon the matter?'—said Dobbs, following

Barnsley, candle in hand, into the hall; under the apprehension that certain tin boxes bearing a painted inscription of John Barnsley, Esq., Stokeshill Place, might find their way out of his office; and that, in snatching at the shadow of an election, he might lose the substance of a good client.

'No, Sir, I shall confer upon it elsewhere!' cried Barnsley; and having put aside the starveling footboy who rushed with one arm in his jacket to open the door, he made a majestic exit out of the house, and entrance into his carriage. 'To Wynnex Abbey!' was his almost mechanical instruction to the servants attending it.

The command sounded well to Dobbs junior, but hollowly to himself. Barnsley knew that his occupation at Wynnex was gone, and that he had a peremptory one elsewhere; but like many other excellent deskmen of business, the laird of Stokeshill was a bad man of council; not ready in expedients, not prompt in decision. It was not till he had rattled along the high street of Westerton, at that hour thronged with workmen whistling homewards from their day's labour, and entered the level road leading across the bridge and water meadows up to the higher grounds adjoining Wynnex Abbey, that the muffled sound of the wheels on the fibrous soil seemed to allow free scope to his meditations.

What was he about to do?—To lose a whole night, or rather to throw a whole night's action into the hands of his adversary!—The committee already formed at Hawkhurst, was about to assume its public posture. His own address might still forestall that of Sir Henry Woodgate. A fee to the Westerton printer might complete his own within an hour after daybreak. The draught of the address he had carried for many months past in his pocket-book; and lo, he jerked the check-string, and the coachman was bidden back to the town. In a few minutes, Barnsley was standing in the printing-office of Westerton.

CHAPTER XIV.

But by the time Barnsley attained the point at which he has been already described, musing before his daughter's

fire with his considering cap upon his head, he began to repent at leisure of all that he had said and done in his haste. Besides offering a couple of guineas, in bribery to the corrector of the Westerton press, to produce a thousand addresses on the morrow before nine o'clock, he had hurriedly modified his address to meet the new position of affairs, while standing perplexed in the printer's office, listening to protestations of the difficulty of disencumbering their presses to throw off the precious document.

But this was not the worst!—Westerton,—like most semi-manufacturing towns, whose river hath mills and factories to manufacture quarrels as well as cotton-twist, cloth, calico, or paper—had the advantage of possessing in addition to Messrs. Dobbs, Dobbs junior, Snobbs and Co., whose cliency and brass plate were the largest in the town, a house of business, established thirty years later upon a very slight capital either of money or respectability, by two clever, dashing, thick-and-thin attorneys; ready to undertake any job that presented itself, without examining the colour of their fingers after the business had passed through their hands. Among such people as the Walmers, Marstons, Sullivans, and Holloways, the county families, as they were called at Westerton in contradistinction to those of the town, there was small demand for the services of such people, and they were denounced as nuisances and a discredit to the place; especially immediately after having been the means of obtaining justice against these great monopolizers, for certain of the worms whose labours served to produce the silk brocade of which their gaudy robes were spun and woven. The attorney with the small brass plate did, in short, at high remuneration for the poor, all that Barnsley executed gratuitously for the rich; re-establishing dormant rights, and rectifying established abuses.

Such lawless individuals as these lawyers, had of course an indifferent reputation. After the 'county families' had set their faces against them, the small gentry and leading tradesmen made proof of their gentility by following the example of the magnats. Wonderful tales were related of the misdoings of Messrs. Harpenden and Hill; how, having the disposal of the savings of certain small farmers and thrifty widows, they had dropped the amount into ever-

lasting darkness through the yawning mouth of securities in Van Diemen's Land or mines in South America, or the moon,—no matter which,—to the ruin and indignation of the layers up of those treasures, which lawyers and thieves are too apt to break through and steal. There was no end to the rumours of their malefactions; and it came to pass, that so vile were the epithets bestowed upon them in the polite conversation of the neighbourhood, that all who, after hearing them denounced as monsters in human shape, took courage to come in contact with them, were amazed to find, in Messrs. Harpenden and Hill, two well-mannered, intelligent men, seeing the abuses of the world in a strong light, and attacking them in a straightforward way. The individuals thus enlightened began, of course, to surmise that the rumours circulated against these interloping brethren by Dobbs, Dobbs jun., Snobbs and Co., might resemble the manœuvres of the swell mob, who cry out 'Stop thief!' while they are picking a pocket.

Meanwhile Barnsley, who was good lawyer enough to discover that Harpenden and Hill were even better, and who, on more than one private and public occasion had found them plucking him by the skirts, no sooner found war declared against him in the names of Woodgate, Sullivan, Dobbs, and Snobbs, than he hastily made up his mind to transfer his custom to their rivals; and already, Harpenden and Hill had received instructions, which served to new point every pen in their office! They desired no better sport than to make war upon Messrs. Dobbs and Snobbs with the money, men, and ammunition of the proprietor of Stokeshill Place; and were delighted to find Barnsley, like all men in a passion, make a much louder declaration of hostilities than the occasion required. Nothing was easier than to aggravate this martial ardour: they managed to make their knight prick himself with his own lance, and fancy himself wounded by the enemy.

Few people are at the trouble of ascertaining under whose influence they move through life, or whether they are doing the will of others or their own. In these times of statistical demonstration, when even the number of newspaper readers in the kingdom is shown by a table, it would be an excellent problem for some under secretary of an under

secretary of state, wanting to document himself into notoriety, to set forth the moral influences which control various districts and parishes. The rural population would usually be found under the dominion of the clergy; but the small towns would prove subjected to that of the attorneys. In times of war, the priest and the warrior have the upper hand; but in the piping times of peace, the law allies itself to the church, to secure good order among the people, and the lion's portion of their spoil.

The influence of a thriving country attorney is, in fact, prodigious!—He is the holder of every man's secrets,—the comptroller of many men's property. The farmer deposits his hoard with him; the squire his animosities; and family disgraces, family afflictions, are shut up under padlock and key, in those Pandora's boxes, the tin cases of his office. He might publish a tariff of the consciences of the district, and estimate to a pennyweight the principles, political or moral, of a whole population of clients! The lawyer's confessional is, in fact, one of wider avowal than the priest's; for the client who refrains from telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, may lose his cause; while the penitent reserves a portion of his crimes, trusting to some saving grace to facilitate a future confession. If there be truth in the dictum that 'knowledge is power,' Harpenden and Hill were unquestionably great men; for they knew all that *could* be known of the families in and near Westerton.

But no sooner did Barnsley escape to home and reflection, from the specious promises with which they had fed his hopes of revenge, than he began to feel that he had been precipitate; that he had undertaken a prodigious effort, a prodigious expense,—with the certainty of provoking a thousand personal vexations, and fixing a great gulf betwixt the families of Sullivan and himself. Hitherto, nothing had occurred between Hawkhurst and Stokeshill that might not be effaced and forgotten. But, in the heat of an election, branding-irons would be made hot to impress an ineffaceable token of enmity between them. Lord Shoreham, too, had evidently taken part with the friend of his friend Brereton, and was adding his weight to the scale;—and whether Sir Henry Woodgate should obtain his seat or his defeat, the event of the contest must detach John Barnsley from the

holy alliance, to cement which he had dedicated twenty years of his existence. Dear as were his parliamentary projects, they chiefly regarded the consolidation of his dignity as one of the allied powers; and second thoughts suggested, that the choice of some other seat would have constituted him M.P. without so much offence to his neighbours.

The time, however, for second thoughts was over. Barnsley had overstepped their modesty, to plunge at once *in medias res*. He was *pledged* to come forward. His protestations were about to come flying all abroad on the wings of one thousand addresses, in two-line pica. Harpenden and Hill had pasted him to the wall:—it only remained to screw his own courage to the sticking-place!—After such prodigious protestations, how could he dare withdraw, with his new attorneys ready to circulate through the country, tidings of his shabby retraction; for Harpenden's brother, alas! was editor of the County Chronicle; and Hill, the intimate friend of Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge, who would never cease from punching him in the ribs for the remainder of his days, with a query of 'Why is the Arctic expedition like a friend who shall be nameless? Do you give it up? Because it showed us its Back, and couldn't find its way to the pole!' No! it would be impossible to provoke the retaliations of such people as Harpenden and Hill! He had already placed in their hands a cheque for one thousand pounds on the Westerton bank, of which Closeman was the leading partner; had already instructed them to proceed with certain proposals, needless to particularise, to a certain carpet-manufacturer, who had lately got up in vestries, clubs, and other public meetings, a sort of patriotic opposition to brazier Timmins. As far as the bond of common Toryism would permit, it was intended by Barnsley and his advisers to set up their cause as that of the people against the aristocracy,—the most plausible character to assign to the struggle between the Woodgates with their parchments, *versus* Barnsley with his stock receipts.

While these notions were revolving in his mind, with his feet resting on the fender, Barnsley, like all people who in winter build castles in the air, seemed to be building them in the fire. At length, he was interrupted by the mild voice of Miss Winston, who had quietly taken a seat by his side.

'Mr. Squills has been here, during your absence, Sir,' said she. 'He considers Miss Barnsley *much* better this evening.'

'Thank God!'

'She has had many hours' undisturbed rest. The sore throat is subsiding,—her pulse is—'

'Yes, yes!—You did not say anything to him of what you were mentioning to me at breakfast?'

'About Margaret's anxiety to be moved to Stokeshill?—Yes, indeed, Sir. As you were not here, I made all the inquiries you desired; and Mr. Squills assures me that the day after to-morrow (if the weather prove fine) there will be no difficulty in removing Miss Barnsley, well wrapt up, and carried down stairs in her cloak. He offered to come and assist in her removal, and accompany us in the carriage to Stokeshill.'

'How vastly unlucky!' was Barnsley's ejaculation. 'But it will be easy to postpone it. I will thank you, Miss Winston, to say nothing on the subject to Margaret, or in the house.'

"I fancy, Sir,' replied the governess, hesitatingly, 'that Mr. Squills himself apprised Lord Shoreham of the arrangement. I saw him walking with my Lord and one of his uncles, on the lawn.'

'Very officious on the part of Mr. Squills,' observed Barnsley. 'Who told him to say anything about the matter?'

'I suppose he thought it might be gratifying to his Lordship to learn that poor Margaret was out of danger.'

'Rather say gratifying to get her out of the house,' cried Barnsley, with bitterness. 'But no matter! Removal at present is out of the question. I am satisfied that removal would be death to my daughter.'

'Mr. Squills is of opinion——'

'Mr. Squills knows nothing about the matter! Stokeshill is about to become a scene of uproar and confusion.'

Miss Winston looked alarmed.

'Stokeshill, for the next fortnight, will be a most unfit residence for a person in a delicate state of health. I shall myself be prevented giving you the least attention; and, under all circumstances, Margaret cannot be better than

where she is. Lady Shoreham writes me word that they go straight to Tynemouth Castle from Ramsgate, and will not be back here till after Christmas. In this remote wing you are no restraint upon Lord Shoreham, nor Lord Shoreham upon you. I shall liberally remunerate the trouble of the servants; and——'

'But Margaret, Sir;—poor Margaret is so extremely anxious to get home! I never saw her impatient on any subject before; but it is impossible to express her desire to get away from the Abbey.'

'Merely the irritation of her disease—nothing in the world else!' replied the father. 'I am sure she is very comfortable here,' he continued, looking round at the handsome furniture of the room. 'You have everything you want?'

'Everything, Sir;—the housekeeper is extremely attentive.'

'And now you have got old Mrs. Molyneux from Stokeshill to sit up, you can take a night's rest. Margaret is fond of Mrs. Molyneux; and Squills considers her the best nurse in the country.'

'I intend, Sir, to go to bed to-night. Now all anxiety is over, I shall be able to sleep. Mrs. Molyneux has already taken up her post. Have you any further orders for me, before I retire?'

'None. I am for bed myself. I must be at Stokeshill by seven o'clock; and shall probably pass to-morrow at Westerton.'

After a glance into the sick room, to ascertain that the night lamp was trimmed, the barley water in its place, and due preparation made for Mrs. Molyneux's green tea, the father and governess accordingly retired; leaving the formal old lady in her pinched cap and snow-white apron, to preside over the rest of Margaret.

But the rest of invalids who slumber by day is apt to be disturbed at night; and it is part of the charter of sick-nurses to keep their patients awake, by snoring or gossipping. Mrs. Molyneux belonged to the latter class of disturbers; and after having made up the fire at midnight, and smoothed the restless pillow of Miss Barnsley, she drew her arm-chair forward and began, in a low voice, to recapitu-

late all the village news of Stokeshill. Margaret was glad to listen: glad to escape from her own weary recollections. She was fond of Mrs. Molyneux, who had officiated as her nurse, previous to the arrival of Miss Winston; and it was from *her* Margaret had then gathered such miraculous legends of the virtues and graces of the Woodgate family,—legends since repeated whenever Margaret stood to gossip for ten minutes in dame Molyneux's cottage.

'Well, Miss Margaret, my dear, we have had strange doings at Stokesell since you have been away,' said the old lady, in an audible whisper.

'Indeed,' said Margaret faintly. 'I thought the rejoicings at Wynnex had sufficed the whole neighbourhood.'

'Oh! I'm not speaking in the way of bonfires or strong beer, or them sort of things. We have had Sir Henry up at the village.'

'Sir Henry!'

'Sir Henry Woodgate, my dear. His grandfather, you know, died last year in foreign parts;—and the young barrynet's come to his title,—more's the pity one can't say to his estate.'

'I shall be very much affronted, my good nurse, if you give me that hint again,' said Margaret, playfully.

'Lor' bless you, my dear Miss Margaret, you know very well there's nobody but just yourself we could bear to see at Stokesell in the room of them as should be there. But sartainly it was a sight to make our hearts glad (that is them what is of the old times and can remember the real family up at the Place,) to see a fine grown gentleman coming among us, with a kind word for one, and a shake of the hand for t'other, reminding us as he was the little Harry what had just begun to canter his pony through the village when the family troubles came, and all was forced to be sold off.'

'Sir Henry was born, then, before the Woodgate family left the Place? Yes, I remember it was his rocking-horse was left in my nursery, and his little play-garden to which I succeeded.'

'To be sure it war! I used often to tell you so, my dear, when I came to be with you. Sich a fine sperity boy as 'twas. I've seen the men set Master Harry on the colts about the Place without saddle or bridle, when he was scarce

more than three years old, and he'd a seat then as firm as a man grown. And such a noble heart of his own! Such a parting 'twixt him and his nurse what took him from a babby, —old Mrs. Woods of Woods End, her as you sometimes calls on Miss, who's got such a breed of bantams.'

'Yes—I remember,—an old friend of yours whom you used to take me to visit when a child; and who had always so much to say of the grandeur of the ladies of the Woodgate family; of Lady Woodgate's jewels when she went to court—'

'And well she might,' interrupted the old lady, smoothing down her apron; 'for good friends they'd been to her. For all the want they'd fallen into, nurse Woods' pension is reg'lar paid her by lawyer Dobbs as the quarter comes round; and scarce a Christmas, but some token, (a shawl or a bit of lace, or a something,) brought over by Mr. Henry from foreign parts when he came back'ards and for'ards from Eton school; ay! and sometimes a line in his'n or Miss Agnes's own writin,'—and that was more than all!'

'The villagers at Stokeshill must have been much gratified by his visit,' said Margaret with a sigh, feeling how much might have occurred on such an occasion to mortify her father.

'That you may well say, Miss! Lor' bless you, it war'nt sooner known that the fine young gemman what had rode through the Market Place asking his way to Farmer Hawkins's at Longlands, was Sir Henry Woodgate, than the church bells was set a ringing, that had not rung afore for a Woodgate any time these twenty years; and I warrant, there was'nt a house nor a hovel in the parish that didn't send out young and old to get a look at the last of the old family! Bless you, there was those as hadn't been seen in the sunshine for many a year, made a shift to crawl out as he passed by. Old Alice Molyneux, my mother-in-law (as was ninety-four last Lammas), and Isaac Digges (as nobody knows the age on in the parish, but I've heard Alice say he was a man grown when she was a bit of a lass), well Miss—there we all stood (for you may be sure I was among 'em, by good luck, I'd just come home from nursing young Mrs. Snooks up at Daisy Head); all the littl'uns with posies in their hands, and what was more, most of the old'uns with tears in their eyes; and when the crowd spied out Sir Henry

a riding, side by side with Hawkins, along the Larch lane from the churchyard, bless you, there came of a sudden such a silence as you might have heard a pin drop—except here and there some child a whispering to its mother, was that the great Sir Ranulph de Woodgate?'

'Whose monument is in Stokeshill church?' added Margaret with a faint smile.

'Why, you see, any Woodgate at all at Stokesell was like one a coming from the dead; and so the poor innocents couldn't make it all out.'

'And is Sir Henry Woodgate a fine young man?' inquired Margaret, by way of gratifying her nurse.

'Why as to handsome, my dear,

Handsome those,
As handsome does,

as the saying is. Them as holds for handsome a ruddy, open-featured youth, like Mr. Cyril Holloway the parson, or young lawyer Dobbs, or the like, mightn't think so much of Sir Henry, who's dark, and may be a little stern, like folks as is brought up with trouble about 'em. But if a fine young man means one as couldn't walk along the High street of Westerton without every 'dividual turning round to ask his name, (certain sure as the stranger must be som'un with good blood in his veins),—then, never did you see a handsomer nor a nobler!—though to be sure there was a mist before my eyes as I looked at him that prevented my seeing over and above clear. So when he got right among us, Miss, he stopped his horse and was about to say somethin' handsome, but bless you! before he could open his lips, such a hurrah!—you might have heard it from the Market Cross up to the Place! If the Squire hadn't been here a 'tending of you, Miss Margaret, I have my doubts whether he'd have found it quite agreeable.'

'My father would have thought it only natural the people should rejoice to see the last descendant of a family to whom the village is so much indebted.'

'I don't know that, Miss. Mrs. Hawkins always gives me to understand that her husband——'

'Never mind the Hawkinses; they are no well-wishers to my father. Tell me about Sir Henry.'

'I don't wish no better, Miss Barnsley. So as I was saying, after he'd spoke a word to all of them as their names was known to him,—such as Mrs. Woods' married daughters —(his foster-sisters he called 'em) and my husband's family (and when it came to my turn you may be sure I made him my best obedience), Farmer Hawkins whispered to such as stood nearest, that Sir Henry was a going to the church to see was the family monuments kept in order; and so the people had too much judgment to follow 'em, but only kept bowing and curtseying and waving their hats as long as Sir Henry was in sight. So when they got to the church, Sir Henry gave five guineas for the ringers to the old clerk what held his horse for him to light,—(just three more, Miss, than the Squire gave for ringing when you was a-born); and in he walks, straight up to the chancel, with a grave, firm face. And Master Hawkins told afterwards to his wife, as he never saw such a fine look as the young man gave to the old tombs, and hatchments up above them, and the tilting lance, and gloves, and ragged banner what hangs over old Sir Ranulph de Woodgate's marble Sir Coficus!— And when Sir Henry walked out of the church again, and stood to put his hat on a moment on the threshul', them as saw him told me he was as pale as the dead, and seemed grown older by years than when he went in. And there stood the old clerk what had buried his father and great-grandfather, crying like a child at the churchyard stile.'

'And did Sir Henry visit the Place?'—demanded Margaret, in a faltering voice.

'No, Miss—no power on earth would get him there. Farmer Hawkins told him the Squire was from home and you was from home, and he would answer for it, none of you would take it amiss. But he answered that he hadn't quite courage for that;—or words to that effect, and away he went.'

'And whence did he come to Stokeshill?'

'From Hawkhurst, Miss. Didn't I tell you he was a-staying at his cousin Squire Sullivan's, at Hawkhurst, for the grand doings at the Abbey? It seems he was at school or college or something of that, with the eldest young Mr. Sullivan (what's changed his name for a fortin'), and with

my young Lord Shoreham, and so he came down among 'em of a visit.'

'Is he gone again, Mrs. Molyneux?'

'Gone!—bless your heart, no!—He's been a-staying at the inn at Westerton, treated for all the world like a king's son.'

'How very strange!' observed Margaret.

'Why, you see, Miss Barnsley, atween ourselves, it *is* said that Sir Henry be a-going to be a parliament man, a'cause Squire Holloway be a-going to be a lord. Mrs. Hawkins was a-hinting to me a-Sunday a-coming out of church that her good man declared Sir Henry Woodgate be to come to be one of the greatest men in England, since the great Billy Pitt,—and that young as he be, he can talk for all the world like a print book.'

'You do not mean,' said Margaret, raising her head upon her hand, and sufficiently aware of her father's projects to know what a mortification was likely to fall upon him,—'that Sir Henry Woodgate is going to stand against my father for Westerton?'

'I don't know about his standing against your papa, Miss; but I know he be going to stand for Westerton. As I came through Westerton here this morning, all the town was full of it.'

'How unfortunate!' sighed Margaret.

'I'm sure I knows none as has better right to be a parliament man!' said the nurse, settling the pillows of the invalid and the affairs of the nation. 'And do you know, Miss, there was but two things talked about at Stokesell the day of the young gentleman's visit. First, that there hadn't been as much beer drawn at the Woodgate Arms put a whole month together, as there was that night a drinking of Sir Henry's health, and long life to the old family; and next;—but may be you'll take it amiss if I tell you what next?'—

'No,' said Margaret, faintly, fancying it was only her pride that was about to be wounded.

'Well then, Miss, all the talk from high to low, was what a pretty match might be made up atween Sir Henry and yourself, and so to restore Stokesell to the lawful owner.'

'Is not my father, then, the lawful owner?'

'Yes, as far as such a property can be bought;—but you know the king in olden times bestowed the estate upon Sir Ranulph de Woodgate for his services to the crown, and it was the family's by royal gift,—the family hadn't no right to sell it. And so, you see, a marriage atween yourself and the young barrynet would set all straight. And who knows? I'm sure you'd make as nice a couple as ever stepped in shoe leather.'

'If I get well again, you must contrive to make me Lady Woodgate then,' said Margaret; and apprehensive of hearing more on the subject than she might know how to answer, she expressed a desire to sleep.

'I hope I han't a-tired you?'—said the good woman, drawing the curtains.—'I thought, poor thing, you might be the better for a bit of chat; but I shall never forgive myself if you're any the worse for it to-morrow.'

'Never fear,' replied the kind-hearted girl. 'I promise you to be better in the morning. Good night, I am going to have a refreshing sleep.' This promise poor Margaret verified by a night spent in snatches of painful dreams; in which Sir Henry Woodgate with the tilting gloves and lance of his ancestor stood on the Westerton hustings opposed in single combat to her father. After which, she found herself at the altar of Stokeshill church, attired in bridal white and her hand clasped in that of the marble effigy of Sir Ranulph de Woodgate, which stood as a bridegroom by her side.

Singularly enough, some mysterious concatenation of ideas assigned to both figures the face and features of the uncomely knight who had fled from her presence in the Wynnex library, and lent her the protection of his arm into the Wynnex dining-room!

CHAPTER XV.

The following morning, before Margaret's heavy eyes were unclosed or Miss Winston up and in attendance, Barnsley, half opening the door of the sick room, ascertained from the tidy old nurse that all was going on well, ere he proceeded to the order of the day. If ever business could prove un-

welcome to him, it was now, when he had to fulfil in cold blood the hot vapourings of a moment of excitement.

And lo! skirting the very suburbs of Westerton, the scaffold-palings of a half-finished house presented, placarded to his view, an ADDRESS, beginning with a flourishing A, and ending with the simple Y of plain 'John Barnsley,' at which his favourite mare pricked up her ears, as if conscious that it involved her future interests in life. No one was going by at that early hour, but a bricklayer's lad with a hod upon his shoulder, and a squalid shirtless child who was looking up to the mortar-whitened though unwashed artificer, in admiration of the wholeness of his garments; and Barnsley had half a mind to ascertain, with his own eyes, to what pitch of literary eloquence his indignation of the preceding night might have attained. But he wanted courage to learn the extent to which he had pledged himself; and when, on advancing into town, he saw his manifesto confronted with a writing on the wall of 'WOODGATE FOR EVER!' and another ADDRESS, ending, (as Closeman would have said) 'not Ysely, but too well,' with the mute E of the haughty Sir Henry Woodgate, the right electioneering spirit entered into his soul; and he felt that he could not have promised too much, if his promises tended to place him at the head of the poll.

But what a miraculous transformation had Barnsley already undergone!—He who was accustomed to ride through Westerton at the busiest hours of the day, passing Mrs. Squills with her five green-spencered little girls, Mrs. Dobbs junior trudging to the circulating library with five dirty marble-covered volumes in her hand, or Mrs. Timmins, standing in the doorway of the milliner's shop, like a standard advertisement of its fashions,—and pursue the even tenor of his way without recognition of either of the three goddesses, pre-engrossed by the price of stocks which he had just learned at the bank, or the contract for certain out-buildings of one of the Wynnex farms, of which he had just approved the estimate;—he, though the only females now stirring in the town were thrifty maids-of-all-work twirling their mops before its doors, went slow,—smiled courteously,—and bowed to every eye that he could catch. Nay, having encountered at the door of Messrs. Harpenden and Hill, a cobbler of some notoriety in the town, carrying home in his leathern

apron to Mr. Richard Dobbs a pair of pumps which had required refreshing after the Wynnex ball, he stopped and gave orders for two pair of shooting-shoes, in a tone of the mildest magnanimity.

On entering the office of his new cabinet ministers, the shuffling of the clerks' feet, as they rose to do honour to his first appearance on that stage, produced an agreeable impression on his ear. Barnsley loved an attorney's office, with its musty smell and busy hissing or sputtering of pens, just as a Beckford venerates the tribune at Florence, or a Heber the library of the Vatican. And as he stood in that of Messrs. Harpenden and Hill with its curtains of green serge, its high leather stools, and wainscoting of deed boxes,—'his foot was on his native heath, and his name was McGregor!'

On a supplemental table in one corner of the room, he saw files of his own Addresses, and a clerk scuffling them into envelopes, with wafers and a wafer-seal by his side, preparatory to their dispersion over the country;—about two hundred were already closed and addressed, bearing witness to the young man's activity.

'Can I speak with Mr. Harpenden?' inquired Barnsley of the head clerk.

'If you will do us the favour, sir, to wait a few minutes in the parlour,' answered he, fixing his pen behind his ear, and ushering the member postulant into an inner room. 'Mr. Harpenden is rather tardy this morning. He was up to a late hour, I believe, sir, with unexpected business.'

'Yes yes!—I know.—Inform him Mr. Barnsley is here.'

And, while the clerk shuffled away in obedience to the command, Barnsley addressed himself to a perusal of the Westerton weekly paper, a copy which lay, damp from the press, upon the table. He started,—he jumped up,—he sat down on the black window-seat to ascertain, in clearer daylight, that his eyes did not deceive him!—But no,—the type was clear as type could be, in which was set forth the 'ADDRESS of SIR HENRY WOODGATE, BART., TO THE WORTHY AND INDEPENDENT ELECTORS OF WESTERTON!!!'—while of himself, or his intentions,—not a word!'—

Yet it was at the self-same office whence this flaming

sword had issued to defend the hustings against his advances, that his own manifesto of the preceding night had been transmitted to durable inscription!—The editor could not but have seen it; could not but have known of his intention of coming forward.—It was clear that the Westerton paper had been bought over by his antagonist!

Ere he refolded the treacherous journal, Mr. Harpenden bowed his way into the room, with a portentous face and grave aspect, to inform his new client, in the words of one of his old ones, that 'Jem Spraggs, the carpet-weaver, warn't to be had at no money.'

'I have, however, taken an opportunity,' he added, 'to sound the intentions of a most influential member of the corporation, whose definitive answer to my proposals will reach me this day at three o'clock. In the mean time, may I inquire, Sir, whether you are assured of the support of your late ward?'

'Of Lord Shoreham? I *ought* to be assured of it,' replied Barnsley. 'But so many strange disappointments have occurred within the last eight days, that if my own daughter had a vote, I should feel it necessary to canvas her.'

'Let us clearly understand our position, then,' resumed Harpenden. 'Sir Henry Woodgate has the Hawkhurst interest. Lord Withamstead, I find, will remain neuter; and taking into consideration the votes you have secured, and those I think I can venture to promise, I do not hesitate to say that the Wynnex interest will cast the election. Your doubts, therefore, cannot be too immediately cleared up.'

'My position with regard to that young man is so extremely delicate,'—observed Barnsley.

'My dear Sir,—electioneering matters admit of no delicacy!' interrupted the attorney, settling his waistcoat. 'Delicacy is wholly to be laid aside. Situated as you are with regard to my Lord Shoreham, no one can be intermediate between you. Sir Henry Woodgate it seems is his schoolfriend: *you* have proved, I might almost say, a benefactor. I should recommend you not to lose a minute in pushing your claims upon him; and it is most essential that I should learn his ultimatum when I see you here again at three.'

And, after another hour of dry examination of lists, and inquiries into influence, Barnsley so far complied with the injunctions of his attorney, as to retrace his way towards Wynnex. He began to see, with Harpenden, that it was by Lord Shoreham he ought to be proposed. He, who for so many years had been directing the affairs of others, and putting everything in the county into its place, was as easily managed as a child the moment it came to the administration of affairs where his own self-consequence was at stake.

Arrived at the Abbey, he was informed that my lord had 'just stepped into the village;' a phrase he should rather have expected to hear applied to the kitchen-maid,—for Lord Shoreham was no 'stepper' unless when grouse shooting on the moors; and hitherto had not seemed to be aware of the existence of the village. Conceiving that, like King Cophetua of old, the young Viscount might have yielded to the attractions of some Helen in a russet gown, Barnsley judged it advisable to follow; and it was no hard matter to ascertain, on arriving there, that my lord and the gentlemen were up at the Rectory. With still increasing wonder, the eager candidate followed; and though the almost imbecile state of Dr. Dodwell had for years excluded visitors from his house, Barnsley wanted no excuse for intruding upon one whom, in his administration of the estates of the Shoreham family, he had omitted no opportunity of obliging.

The entrance-gate of the Rectory was open; nay, even the parlour door stood ajar, where the old gentleman, in his flannel dressing-gown and cotton nightcap, was accustomed to pass the year round with his speaking-trumpet on the table beside him; and beside the table, the chair of his shrewish housekeeper, Mrs. Rumbell, who took care to monopolise this sole means of communication with her master. As Barnsley, unobserved, entered the room into which he found he had been scarcely a minute preceded by Lord Shoreham and his uncles, the housekeeper was trying to scream into the ear of the old rector, (amazed by such a succession of guests,) that he beheld 'my lord,'—the only lord likely to enter there—and his two quondam pupils, the Hon. Augustus and Alfred Drewe.

'Mr. Alfred—Mr. Augustus?'—faltered the old doctor, making a vain effort to rise, by means of the arms of his easy chair, and instantly sinking again. And with half unconscious gesture, he tried to ascertain whether he were in a state to receive such guests, by feeling on his head for his wig;—that awful buzz-wig under cover of which he had for years tried to impress upon the minds of his rakish pupils some respect for his person and the classics,—in hopes that their modern instances might do credit to the wise saws of his inculcation.

'It is many years, young gentlemen, since we met!'—quavered the old doctor, addressing the Parson and Augustus, in his now squeaking treble.

'Many years!—five and twenty, and no mistake, I fancy,' replied Alfred, in his usual robust tones. 'And how have you managed to make it out all this time, eh,—doctor?'

'The gentleman speaks to you, Sir,' said Mrs. Rumbell, perceiving that the Parson's address was lost upon her master.

'Sir?'—said the old man, putting up his trumpet to Augustus, fancying it was by him he had been addressed.

'Mr. Drewe wishes to know, Sir, how you find yourself?'—shouted the housekeeper, giving her own interpretation of the slang text.

'Thank ye—thank ye,—pretty well!—ugh! ugh! ugh! I may say pretty well,—I may say a trifle better than last winter;—a hale man for my years;—could do my duty as well as ever, gentlemen, if they chose to let me.—But there are evil-disposed people in this parish;—Mrs. Rumbell here will tell you, gentlemen,—ugh! ugh! ugh!—that there are *very* evil-disposed people in this parish.'

'Your lungs, doctor, seem tolerably good,' observed Alfred Drewe, anxious to ascertain the odds upon his chance of translation to a living, which the accession of his nephew to the Wynnex property now rendered a desirable residence.

'Sound as ever, Mr. Augustus—sound as ever!' squeaked the doctor, affecting a little phthisicky cough to prove the truth of his assertions. 'And pray, Sir, how go on the classics?—Do the duties of your cloth admit of occasional dallying with the muses,—eh, Mr. Augustus?'

And the doctor's eyes twinkled as when, in former times, he attempted a joke with his pupils; while Lord Shoreham, aware that the tuneful Nine of his uncle's Castaly were no other than the coryphées of M. Laporte's Parnassus, laughed out without restraint.

'You don't quite neglect the classics I hope, young gentlemen?'—pursued the superannuated pedagogue—'for as I used to say with Horace, to my late lamented pupil, your brother the Viscount, ugh, ugh, ugh,—

> Doctrina sed vim promovit incitam,
> Rectique cultus pectora roberant;
> Utcunque defecere mores,
> Dedecorant bene-nata culpæ!

or as Ovid hath it,—ugh, ugh, ugh!—

> Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes
> Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros!

We don't forget our Ovid,—ugh, ugh, ugh!—eh, Mr. Augustus?' And again he raised his tin trumpet towards Drewe for a reply.

'You're poking your fun at me, old boy!' answered Gus, with his usual dry immoveable countenance.

'Sir?'—mumbled the doctor, long accustomed to mistrust his own organs of hearing.

''Tis my brother there, who's the Parson,' resumed Augustus. 'It was Alfred, you know, Doctor, who grabbed the living of Claystick, when they found me not worth japanning.'

'True!—a rural deanery,—Claystick on the coast of Lincolnshire; a tit bit—ugh, ugh, ugh!—quite a tit bit!—How many thousand souls, pray?'

'Soles, doctor?—flounders, as I hope to be saved!' cried Parson Drewe, taking out his cigar-case. 'The cursedest take-in in England, that Lincolnshire coast;—nothing but conger-eels and fen-flies.'

'I remember visiting the parish of Claystick with my late lamented pupil—ugh, ugh, ugh,—your brother the Viscount,' replied the Doctor, having accustomed himself by long habit neither to see, hear, nor understand. 'Charming window, Sir, in the nave,—retiring window,—some say Saxon,—in my opinion—ugh, ugh,—the Gothic of Ed-

ward III.—glass in fine preservation—design perfect—the incredulity of St. Thomas, if I recollect—ugh, ugh, ugh,—a tit-bit, quite a tit-bit—ought to have been in Dugdale!—Pray, Mr. Drewe, did you ever think of sending a notice of it to the Gentleman's?'—demanded the once zealous correspondent of Sylvanus Urban.

'Not I, doctor,—I sent the whole pack of rubbish to the *Old* Gentleman at once!' replied the parson; and, as he turned round to strike his cigar flint, he discerned John Barnsley, on electioneering thoughts intent, bowing obsequiously on the threshold!

CHAPTER XVI.

Ten days afterwards, when Margaret Barnsley, after being lifted from the carriage by the kind doctor who, according to his engagement, accompanied her and Miss Winston from Wynnex Abbey to Stokeshill, was carried up to the sofa in her own comfortable room, the upper servants, who came curtseying and bowing into the hall to welcome her as she passed, shook their heads on their return to the housekeeper's room, protesting that their sweet young missus was wasted to a shadow. They discerned not that a far more wonderful transformation had taken place;—that the timid girl had become a feeling woman!

How many mothers watch the progress of stature in their children,—the lengthening tresses,—the ripening form,—the progressing accomplishments, the softening manners of their daughters;—how few fix their attention upon the moment when the moral temperament becomes developed;—when thought dawns in the soul, and feeling in the heart!

After having administered the restoratives indispensable to Margaret's exhausted condition, Miss Winston quitted her for a moment, hoping she would fall into a doze. But no sooner was she alone, than the invalid began to gaze inquiringly round the room in which so large a portion of her existence had been passed. *There* stood the piano, awaiting her with its fugues and concertoes,—the drawing-box with its chalks,—the eternal tapestry-frame with its worsteads and floss-silk;—while Blair, Chapone, Graham, Trimmer,

Hannah More, Fordyce, Gisborne, and a few other female classics, displayed their well-worn tomes on the shelves of her limited bookcase. All was as it had been from her childhood,—formal, dry, and unexciting. But from these few objects, endeared to her by a thousand early associations, she turned to the depths of her own heart; where a thousand emotions were already in action, like the troubles fermenting beneath the tranquil oliveyards and vineyards of Vesuvius.

Not six weeks ago, she had quitted that calm monotonous chamber, whose walls had hitherto shut out all glimpses of her future destinies; and already, how much had she seen,—how much did she guess of the world!—When Margaret had stepped trembling into Lady Shoreham's pony phaeton, she regarded her father (as far as she could presume to interrogate her opinions concerning him,) as a man of great influence and consideration,—owner of the fine estate of Stokeshill:—and an omnipotent arbiter set in authority over her. The happiest and greatest of men in Margaret's estimation, she had not conceived him to be less potential in that of the world. But she had now discovered that, under his purple and fine linen, her father's pride was smarting with the very sores of Lazarus;—that there were moments when it became his daughter to surround him with redoubled attentions and tenderness,—moments of fretfulness arising from the rubs inflicted by society against the wounds of his festering pride.

She saw, too, that even their grandeurs at Stokeshill resembled those of the gorgeous Pantheon of the French capital; which, based upon a hollow soil, sinks deeper with every acquisition of ornament; and that the lustre of the Barnsley family served only to throw a light upon the paramount superiority of the Woodgates. It was only since her father had attained sufficient distinction to venture on standing for Westerton, that the neighbourhood had troubled itself to inquire into the history of his elevation in life.—For it *had* at length troubled itself! All the idle records it could rake together to enliven the dry details of an election, had been industriously brought forward to humiliate the opponent of Sir Henry Woodgate; and, though while John Barnsley was contented to be little, they had chosen to con-

sider him great; the moment he aspired to be great, they chose to prove him to be little. But, as Richard Dobbs loudly protested, 'they meant no offence;—it was all fair at an election.'

Indignant at all she gathered of the indignities heaped upon him, Margaret trusted that the ingratitude he was experiencing would at least render him less prompt for the future in sacrificing his time and comfort to the advantage of other people; that he would be less at Westerton,—less at Maidstone—less at Canterbury,—more at home. She would endeavour to render herself a companion worthy of him. She would overcome her timidity,—would strive to converse on topics interesting to him, and obtain Miss Winston's permission to devote herself to a course of reading qualifying her for his society. He should not be allowed to feel the loss of Hawkhurst and the Sullivans, or the vile ingratitude of Lord Shoreham. They were rich, independent, happy;—they might surely travel—surely amuse themselves at home—without requiring the society of lords who despised them, and whom perhaps they had some right to despise.

To London, be it observed, Margaret Barnsley referred not, even in her most secret self-communing; for *there* she suspected lay the source of her father's secret disappointment. On succeeding to his wife's fortune, he had been wise enough to recognise its insufficiency for the fulfilment of any ambitious projects of distinction, in a metropolis so opulent as London; and had settled, in consequence, in a country neighbourhood, where five or six thousand a-year confer local importance and rural nobility. But though conscious that a plain John Barnsley, with John Barnsley's income, was nobody in the parishes of St. James or St. George, he felt that John Barnsley, Esq. M.P., would become a personage even in the presence of royalty itself. He felt this, and waited!—London was neither renounced nor forgotten;—it was deferred. It was there he intended to grow grey; it was there he intended to witness the elevation of his daughter. If all was true that Margaret had heard and suspected, it was there his paternal pride had luxuriated in the chimera of seeing her presented at Court as Viscountess Shoreham!

But these castles in the air had vanished from his view. Although every night on his arrival at Wynnex after the

tedious labours of the day, of canvassing, conferring, chaffering, surmising, disputing, he continued to assert himself sure of his election,—that Messrs. Harpenden and Hill were sure of it,—that Hill had travelled eleven hundred miles to bring up succours of outvoters,—that if money could do his business, it would be done,—Margaret saw, from the depression of his voice, the lengthening of his face, the abstraction of his air, that his hopes were diminishing; or that, if still confident of attaining his object, the means had become distasteful. Reduced to the humiliation of being proposed by Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge, seconded by an oratorical tallow-chandler (whose name of Wright was moralised by Closeman into a thousand puns), while Woodgate was proposed by Lord Henry Marsden, seconded by brazier Timmins, and supported by all the leading families of the neighbourhood, the first day's polling had been in his favour. But the second gave to Sir Henry a majority of thirty-five: and most people thought it a superfluous, or perhaps malicious waste of money, that Barnsley chose to keep it open for a third day's struggle. Margaret was every moment expecting the arrival of a message confirming old Mrs. Molyneux's prognostications of Sir Henry's triumph. She felt that even her father had made up his mind to such a result, from his having suddenly rescinded his former orders, and proposed her removal from Wynnex in the course of the day,—evidently unwilling to have her under the roof of his ungrateful ward at such a moment; or to expose himself, in visiting her there, to the chance of an encounter with the new member for Westerton. He wished her to be at home at the crisis of their public humiliation.

For with Wynnex Abbey, that humiliation was more especially connected. Lord Shoreham, though so far swayed by the laws of decency as to avoid appearing in *overt* opposition to the man by whom his lands and tenements, his flocks and herds, had been an hundred-fold increased, not only positively declined to come forward as his nominator, but lent a scarcely disguised countenance to the rival member. He was known to be with Sir Henry Woodgate in the spirit. Without Mr. Sullivan's pretext of consanguinity to attach him to the red banner, or Mr. Sullivan's motives of resentment to detach him from the blue, he was the mainspring

of the Hawkhurst Committee,—his shallow affectation of neutrality was belied by every word and action.

'How galling will it be henceforth to my poor father to live among all these people,—so long regarded as his friends and allies!'—thought Margaret, as she reclined upon her couch by the fire-side. 'The Sullivans turned to bitter enemies,—the Shorehams to convicted traitors,—Lord Withamstead, I fear, elated into egotism by his new honours,—and even Mr. Closeman rendered more disagreeable than usual, by the self-importance with which his electioneering support will inspire him!—How *will* my father get through the winter!—On Westerton he will naturally turn his back; and alas! what can *I* do to amuse him?—If he were but fond of books,—if he were but fond of music,—if he were but fond of anything but business,—odious, tiresome, *shabby* business!'

Fortunately for Margaret, her meditations were interrupted by the re-entrance of Miss Winston, with a cup of arrow-root, which was to be more palateable than anything Margaret had tasted since her illness; being made by the dear assiduous old Stokeshill housekeeper, with milk from the Stokeshill dairy, which Stokeshill of course believed to be the best and best-managed in the county of Kent.

'Has any further news arrived from Westerton?' demanded Margaret, after thanking her attentive friend.

'None, my dear. But nurse Molyneux asked my leave to go down to the hustings; and fancying you asleep, I would not refuse the poor woman. By the elation of her manner as she tied on her bonnet, it was evident *she* had tidings that Sir Henry's cause is safe; for, like all the ungrateful people of Stokeshill village, her whole soul is with the Woodgates!'

'The force of early association. The first impression on their minds was the importance of Sir Ralph Woodgate; the next generation will feel just the same towards the Barnsleys.'

'No! my dear—never!—It requires centuries to establish such a moral interest as the Woodgates command here. No! such influences will never more be established in England. There is too great an extension of trade. There are too many power-looms and cotton-factories at work.'

'You think the age has assumed too federal a character to admit of a re-concentration of the feudal principle?'

'*My dear!*'—demanded Miss Winston, fancying that her pupil's head was again excited by delirious fever. 'What can you possibly mean?'

'You must ask Mr. Sullivan Brereton,' said Margaret, smiling. 'It is a phrase I heard him repeat eleven times on various occasions during my visit to Wynnex.'

'Ah! Margaret!'—sighed the good governess, taking the cup from her pupil's hands and placing it on the table,—'pray Heaven the lessons you have learned at Wynnex may produce no effect more injurious on your mind than the acquirement by rote of those specious axioms which have set all the nations of the world afloat, like vessels broken loose from their moorings!'

'They have produced nothing inconsistent with my love and veneration for yourself, my dearest friend,'—said Margaret, gratefully sensible that she was indebted for her life to the more than motherly care of Miss Winston, during her late illness. 'But you and I, who have been living so quietly and happily together in seclusion from the busy world, have perhaps too little notion of all that is passing there. Admit that you were not prepared for Lord Shoreham's ingratitude towards my father, or for Mr. Sullivan's vindictive persecution?'

'I was not,' replied Miss Winston. 'But it is always time enough for a Christian to become alive to the failings of his fellow-creatures. I trust Mr. Barnsley will have courage to support the vexation he has met with on this occasion.'

'If this odious election had never taken place!' sighed Margaret—'if Mr. Holloway would but have believed himself sufficiently respected, without adding a coronet to his honours!'

'My dear!' resumed the good woman, who could not altogether lay aside the governess,—'you will find that half the troubles of this world originate in our desire to rise above our equals by superficial distinctions.'

'Well!—I suppose ambition is as indispensable to keep society in motion, and mankind in progress, as the tides to the ocean,' said Margaret. 'But I must say, it has wrought more mischief in our quiet neighbourhood within the last

month than five years will suffice to set at rest. How I wish my father would come home! How I wish it was all over!'

'If Mr. Barnsley had taken warning yesterday—(when I found all Westerton saw how the thing was going),' said Miss Winston, 'he would have spared himself a day's uneasiness. Nobody expected it of him to keep the poll open. The call upon him to come forward had not been strong enough to demand such a sacrifice!'

'I shall never set foot in the town again,' cried Margaret, warming as she pondered upon her father's injuries. 'I hope, dear Miss Winston, you will not ask me to keep up an acquaintance with that Mrs. Dobbs.—The Dobbses are the most ungrateful of all! Not only had they been employed by papa for years; but my uncle Clement took one of the boys to be his *aide-de-camp* in India, at my father's request. Edward Sullivan often used to tell me that papa had been the making of the Dobbses.'

'Young men are apt to talk roundly. Mr. Dobbs has the best business in——'

Her voice was drowned by the sudden noise of some vehicle rattling irregularly up to the house; and looking from the window, Miss Winston perceived a cart and horse galloping up the carriage-drive,—the cart crowded with the stable-servants and gardeners of Stokeshill; all waving their hats tumultuously, and shouting as loud as strong beer could make them,—'Barnsley for ever!—Barnsley for ever!—Barnsley at the head of the poll.'

At the same moment the room door was gently opened; and nurse Molyneux gliding in, muttered with a peevish countenance,—'Well, Miss Barnsley, it's all over! Lord knows how things are gone!—But, by fair means or foul, poor dear Sir Henry's thrown out——'

'And my father returned?' ejaculated Margaret, clasping her hands, her pale face flushed with emotion. 'Thank Heaven!—He will now be happy!'

CHAPTER XVII.

Hitherto Margaret had borne without impatience the slowness of her recovery; but on the morrow of this day of

triumph, nothing but the impossibility of the effort would have prevented her from being carried to Westerton, to witness the ceremony of her father's chairing. She who, on most occasions, could so little enter into his feelings, was fully able to comprehend the delight he must experience in having baffled his ungrateful enemies, and verified the pledges of his new friends. She could imagine all the mortification the faction of Sullivan, Shoreham, Dobbs, and Co., must be enduring.

Sir Henry Woodgate's disappointment, indeed, Margaret did not include among her father's causes of gratification; for Sir Henry had forfeited no duty of friendship or wardship towards her father; nor formed any undue pretension in coming forward for the representation of the borough. Amid so many offenders, Sir Henry was blameless; and there could be no reason to triumph in his defeat. Nor did she altogether overlook his interposition in her own behalf at Wynnex Abbey; for if somewhat ungallant in his after-desertion, he had incontestably stood her friend when others stood aloof. His position in life afforded a strong appeal to her feelings. His exile from the home of his ancestors,—his expulsion from Stokeshill,—combined with Helen Sullivan's commendations and Nurse Molyneux's romances, rendered him an object of especial interest; and Margaret trusted he might speedily obtain a seat for some other borough, in order to develope in parliament those intellectual endowments which might be the means of restoring prosperity to the ruined family. Her filial vengeance, in short, was directed exclusively against Hawkhurst Hill and Wynnex Abbey.

It was lucky, perhaps, for Stokeshill,—her favourite Stokeshill,—that Miss Barnsley's attention had been diverted by her illness from its concurrence in their malefactions. Even her indulgence towards the legendary allegiance of the villagers to the Hand and Flower, would scarcely have sufficed to excuse the hurrahs they had shouted, and the fisticuffs they had pummelled, in the cause of the adversary of her father;—her father, whose bread nourished, and whose fuel warmed them. For Margaret had of course been educated in the country-gentleman-like idea of the immense bond of gratitude created by the bestowal of the lowest

possible measure of wages for the greatest possible measure of labour, upon those whose birth condemns them to—

> Beg their brothers of the dust
> To give them leave to toil;

having been taught by Miss Winston that the hire of a human existence at nine shillings per week, includes the purchase of all its feelings and opinions.

She did not at present know that strict justice rarely achieves popularity; that the man who measures the workhouse bread with too accurate a balance, and refrains from the Samaritan-like distribution of 'good measure pressed down and running over,' *may* have his reward in a Heaven peculiarly devoted to parish-office righteousness, but never in his own parish. The Stokeshill poor saw that Barnsley kept their roads in excellent condition; that, a rigid Macadamist, when they asked for bread, he gave them a stone; that he slipped out of church during service, to watch magisterially over their virtue by driving them out of the alehouse,—breaking his own Sabbath-day in order to amend the sanctity of theirs. But they detested him. They thought him a hard man—a pettifogger—a dirty-doer. They insisted that the blankets assigned to *their* poor-house were four inches less in the square than those given in the parishes of Hawkhurst and Withamstead;—and, by universal acclamation, resolved to hang him in effigy on occasion of the defeat of Sir Henry Woodgate.

But every village has its council of war; and every council of war, from that of Æsop's beasts to the brutes of his Imperial Majesty of all the Russias, its grey-beard member, more cunning than the rest.

A certain master of the arts of hedging and ditching, yclept Job Hanson, who did not happen to be a partisan in the faction of Hawkins, Abdy, and Woods, took occasion to remind his fellow-villagers, with graphic eloquence, that, in looking to the side on which their bread was buttered, though Barnsley buttered it but little, Woodgate buttered it not at all; that whereas half a loaf was better than no bread, it would not do to reject the under-sized penny roll doled forth from Stokeshill Place. Upon this hint, a scarecrow already in progress to represent the new representa-

tive of Westerton, was sentenced to be devoted to the protection of Farmer Abdy's home wheat-field against the sparrows; while Job Hanson was deputed to ascend the tower of the church, and hang out a long white table-cloth crowned with a bunch of laurels,—an ensign of triumph to Barnsley and truce to his people.

These offences, though unsuspected by Margaret, were hinted to the new member himself by John, the cricketing footman, who, for some unexplained cause, or the mere dirtiness of lackey nature, saw fit to play the spy upon the village,—when Barnsley, his cheeks flushed and head throbbing, threw off at night that coat in which no man in his senses would have been anxious, just then, to supersede him. It is perhaps wisely ordained by custom, that the cares of the successful candidate of a contested election are to be drowned on his night of triumph in the only thing strong enough to over-master them—corporation punch. But little less than a hogshead would have sufficed to subdue the irritated nerves of poor Barnsley, or tranquillise his agitation after the excitement he had undergone, previous to the bleeding he was yet to undergo. For though, in the approving eye of the public, he had shaken hands on the hustings with Messrs. Harpenden and Hill, thanking them for the pains they had taken to ensure his success,—he could not obliterate from his mind the amount of the cheques they had taken simultaneously; or that, while Dobbs and Snobbs, in throwing mud in his face, exclaimed jocosely,—'All's fair at an election!' Harpenden and Hill, in the exorbitancy of their rapacity seemed to give the lie to the proverb. It struck Barnsley even in the hurry of the day, that chaises and eight might have been used at the cost vaguely assigned to the chaises and four which were bringing down votes for him from the depths of Wapping or the heights of Holborn Hill; for though Messrs. Closeman and Co. had already honoured his drafts in favour of H. and H., to the tune of three thousand, five hundred pounds, Harpenden spoke of this sum as '*on account*,' as if preparatory to further demands. Five thousand pounds, probably, would scarcely cover his expenses; *his*,—who, for fifteen hundred, might have sailed majestically into the House from other ports; whereas, from Westerton, a pitiful majority scarcely seemed to entitle

him to his costly seat!—Barnsley, so prudent, so almost penurious in his administration of the affairs of his ward, appeared to have gone out of his way to play the spendthrift in the foolish prodigality with which he managed his own.

Between the snatches of his unquiet sleep, these recollections recurred to his mind to mar his enjoyment of those honours, the object of so many years' anticipation. He had lost his friends, his acquaintances, his money, his time, to gain what (it had been hinted to him by the Dobbsites) a scrutiny might yet take away; and which the voices of the whole borough assured him he should retain only till the next dissolution.—Was this worth while?—Alas! the utmost extent of his moral arithmetic went to prove, that if from state and station you take the means of displaying them, there remains—nothing!

And the morrow! The cruelty of the fiat 'Master Barnadine, rise and be hanged!' seemed nothing in comparison with, 'Mr. Barnsley, rise and be chaired!' He felt that he had been elected in opposition to the wishes of what might be called the town; that he had been thrust upon them by the activity of the two H's, and the gathering together of the scattered tribes of Westertonians. Most of the out-voters (London mechanics or men of small business or small men of business elsewhere), had returned to the place from whence they came. His oration would be performed to an audience of dissidents; and he thought of dead cats and rotten apples, and trembled.

But it was too late for retreat. The chair, adorned with its laurels and ribands, was already exhibiting in the shop of Varnish and Deal, the upholsterers, over whose door streamed a blue banner variegated with mud by the malcontents; while the bales of blue ribbon already laid to his account by Miss Tiffany the milliner (from whom Mrs. Timmins threatened to withdraw her custom), were in progress of augmentation by a few thousand yards more, sent for express to Maidstone the preceding night, as if all the maids of Kent were to be indebted for a twelvemonth to come to Barnsley for the splendour of their topknots. As the new member stood before the glass, shaving the lengthened chin of his disconsolate face, he could not but bewail the inconsistency of

destiny; which, during the last six weeks, had condemned a man exclusively devoted to business, to all the fiddle-de-dee of life; to balls, junkets, bonfires, illuminations,—first the pleasures of the table, and now the honours of the chair.

'Sir!'—said John, who was maliciously watching the progress of his master's despondency, 'I hope your Honour be in good heart this morning,—for I'm afeared your Honour will have but a trying day on't. Job Hanson have been up at the Place this morning (about stacking the wood-yard) and told us as how Dobbs's people were recruiting with good bounty money, far and near, for a strong hiss at the chairing; such a mint of money, he says, never was spent at any election since the time Squire Woodgate, Sir Henry's uncle, was shoved to the wall.' (Barnsley's face brightened at the comparison.) 'But to be sure, Sir, times be changed; for nigh as Sir Henry was upon a majority, they say it hav'n't cost him not a tithe part of what's gone out of your Honour's pocket. Farmer Hawkins up at Longlands, he have undertaken to clear Sir Henry out and out, for a matter of eight hundred pound. *His* voters was all residents.'

Barnsley's face grew black as the stock which the footman was buckling on.

'If so be I might make bold to give a bit of advice,' resumed John, watching in the glass into which he peeped over his master's shoulder, to watch the effect produced by his communications,—'I could venture to say as it would be worth while to give the constable a bit of a tip, to keep near your Honour's person, during the ceremony; for from somethin' Job overheard as he was a-passing the Winchelsea Arms, he do think there'll be a sort of a plot a-carrying on.'

'A plot?' reiterated Barnsley, thinking of nothing less than the gunpowder and Guy Fawkes. 'Do they want to blow me up?'

John, though almost as much of a wag as Squire Closeman, was forced (in regard to the subordination of his cloth) to resist the retort that rose to his lips, of 'Lord, Sir, hav'n't you had blowing up enough from them already?'—and simply replied—'Bless you, Sir, no! all they wants is to blow you *down*. They're getting up somethin' of a sham chairing that's all; and heads is so hot at elections, that it will be hard if some on 'em doesn't get broke on sich a

'casion. Would your Honour wish me to speak to the constables?'—

'I have already promised them handsome remuneration,' said Barnsley. 'It was I who procured John Scraggs and Isaak Ray their places, during Mr. Closeman's mayoralty; so I fancy I am pretty sure of them. But it will be as well, perhaps, for my own people to keep as close to me as possible. As soon as the carriage is put up, you, the coachman, and Robert, must be on the alert at the Old Angel; and you can take Gregory and the helper with you, in the coachman's and Robert's second liveries. As many as possible of the Stokeshill servants ought to appear on such an occasion.'

'To be sure, Sir,—if the liveries was anything of a fit. Then there's Bill Scraggs, John's brother, what's been took into the garden, would just fit the old coat as hangs in the hall, what belonged to William, groom, as left in the spring,' said John, taking the opportunity to hint to his master the contempt entertained by his people towards the penuriousness which had defrauded said William of his all but due. 'Would you like Scraggs to go along with the rest?'

'Yes!—no!—ask Lawton,' said his master, who had now reached the chamber door. 'Let the carriage be ready by the time I have swallowed a cup of tea. The new harness and the leopard's skin hammer-cloth,—(it is cold enough for the fur hammer-cloth I think). The servants can have the cart and the bay horses. Robert is to ride Smiler, and attend me to open the gates.'

'Do you return here, Sir, to dress for the dinner at the Angel?'

'I sha'n't have time; the chairing's to be at two o'clock, the dinner at four: I have fifty visits to pay between. So put my things into the carriage. I shall at least find a mo ment at the Angel to change my coat.'

'No doubt you will, now you're a parliament man,' muttered John with a grin, after his master closed the door, and proceeded, pondering over John's intelligence, to take leave of his daughter; like some great Roman general, on the eve of departure to the field.

Could Barnsley have abstracted his attention from the littleness of worldly interest to that which he deemed insig-

nificant, the workings of human affection, he might have been repaid even then, for the defection of Lord Shoreham and the vindictiveness of Sullivan, by the beautiful expression of filial tenderness in Margaret's eyes, as they beamed upon her ill-used father. Her tears were ready to start when he reminded her that he should see her no more till the next day, and at the moment of his hurried kiss, she reflected upon the vexations he might have to undergo before that salutation, to him a mere ceremony, was repeated;—and they burst forth in reality when, about an hour afterwards, she heard his chariot-wheels grinding along the park road towards Westerton.

'Well! things come strangely about in this world,' mused Miss Winston, who from the window was watching his pompous departure; and albeit unused to much exercise of the organs phrenologically denominated of causality and comparison, she could not refrain from putting the new member for Westerton, 'John Barnsley, Esq. M.P. of Stokeshill Place,' into contrast with the smug clerk to whom her first introduction had occurred, while handing Miss Francis from a glass coach in John Street, Adelphi; and who had commenced his initiatory love-letter to her fair charge with 'Herewith I hand you,' and the offering of a Tunbridge-ware netting-box. Times were, indeed, altered with John Barnsley.

In the course of another hour, Margaret had little difficulty in persuading her governess that, as nurse Molyneux resolutely refused to witness the celebration of Sir Henry Woodgate's defeat, it would be but a becoming respect towards her father for Miss Winston to occupy the window which Mrs. Harpenden had officiously written to offer; and as Mr. Squills, who was proceeding to the field of action, volunteered to drive her to Westerton, the governess acceded to Margaret's entreaties. It was worthy of remark how much importance had been acquired by Margaret during her recent danger in the eyes of poor Miss Winston. It was now *her* will that was beginning to decree, *her* opinion to influence. The governess seemed to think she could not sufficiently repay her goodness in surviving!

Kind and considerate as she was, however, Margaret longed to be alone. Convalescence is a moment peculiarly

propitious to reverie; and she lay on her couch, musing on past, present, and to come, with her eyes closed, and the County Chronicle open in her hand. She had been perusing Sir Henry Woodgate's speech on the hustings the preceding day; which, being in reply to some cutting observations of her father, could not be a cut and dry concoction of the Hawkhurst committee. Her spirit was roused by the noble sentiments it embodied. She no longer wondered that Helen Sullivan was his advocate. After dwelling with sympathy and admiration upon the eloquence of Woodgate, she was mortified to observe the poverty of her father's language and the inconclusiveness of his logic. She saw that he had cut a poor figure; and intense was the disgust with which she next proceeded to the vulgar threadbare jokes of his partisan, Mr. Closeman.

There was the report of a second speech from the young baronet, occupying only a few lines,—the speech in which, after the closing of the poll, he took leave of his supporters. Margaret had not thought it possible to comprehend in so small a space, the characteristics of rightness of mind, elegance of taste, and above all of a certain tone to which, whether as regards an equipage, a bow, or a speech in parliament, we assign the vague term of gentlemanly. No person could have given his attention to Sir Henry's farewell words, without feeling that he was listening to a gentleman; she felt she would rather her father had made that speech, than be returned member for Westerton.

Except indeed as regarded the momentary gratification of his pride, Margaret discerned in his triumph only motives of regret. His success would not remove one of the obstacles to his future good understanding with his neighbours; and as none were present to dive into her reflections, she presumed even to doubt whether her father would shine in parliament. With all a woman's predilection for orators and oratory, Margaret knew not how to estimate the value of a man of business, a good committee man, compared with that of a mouther of magnanimous nothings. Her notions of honourable members were derived from great letter applause. The tariff of comparative merit existent in the views of premiers or speaker, did not present itself to her inexperience.

In point of fact, she dwelt perhaps more upon the parlia-

mentary promise of Sir Henry Woodgate, than was altogether dutiful or becoming. Her attention had been powerfully arrested ere his very name was known to her, by the harsh loftiness of his manners; a loftiness distinguished from that of Mr. Sullivan as being grounded upon superiority of abilities instead of mere superiority of birth. Sullivan was proud of his ancient descent, as all in all sufficient: Woodgate, of the elevation of mind which he regarded as the indispensable illustration of illustrious ancestry. In Margaret's limited acquaintance with society, he was the best example of the masculine character. Lord Shoreham was ignoble in all his ideas and ambitions,—Brereton a solemn coxcomb,—George Holloway a lump of clay,—and Edward Sullivan a lump of sugar. Sir Henry alone bore the impress of a man of genius; the misfortunes of his family affording an excuse for the surliness of his hauteur. She ventured to conjecture what modification of this surliness might be produced by a favourable change in his circumstances; by a restoration to the fortunes and estates of his family; by a realisation (if the whole truth must be told) of the romantic project of the gossips of Westerton; and what joy to pour balm into the wounds of such a bosom;—to afford a prop to the sapling springing from a tree so noble!

Two letters, placed in her hand by the old nurse who had so inadvertently afforded her food for meditation, roused her from her trance; the one from her friend Helen Sullivan, the other from her respectable neighbour Lady Withamstead. Both contained congratulations; but Helen's something more.

'I am sure, my dear Margaret,' she wrote, 'that your good sense must appreciate the motives of delicacy which prevent my mother, just now, from inquiring in person how you have borne your removal from Wynnex, and what progress you are making towards recovery. She desires me to express our united hope, that when the irritations produced by, or producing, this unlucky contest shall have subsided, all will be as before among us; or if not, (for where the male half of the human kind is concerned, who can calculate upon probabilities?) that you will believe in our undiminished regard and affection. My mother is not implacable against Mr. Barnsley, nor I against yourself, for your rejec-

tion of Edward's precipitate proposals; and as he seems to be shooting away his disappointment in Norfolk, instead of staying to shoot himself at Hawkhurst, I think it will not be long ere we mutually congratulate him on his perfect recovery of his senses.

'Of this I shall shortly judge, as we are about to join him at Buckhurst. Mamma's health, I grieve to say, is more delicate than ever; and my aunt Grantville is eager to have her under the care of her family physician. When we return, dear Margaret, may we enjoy some happy days together before I go to town for the season! Brereton is with the Drewes, at Tynemouth Castle; where Sir Henry Woodgate is about to join the Wynnex party.

'Accept, dear Margaret, my mother's love and mine, and present our compliments to your good Miss Winston, whom during your illness we fully learned to appreciate.'

This was a cheering letter for Margaret. Though satisfied that things never could be again as they had been, it was something to know that Helen and her mother were as kindly inclined towards her as ever; and her joy in the perusal of it, put her in good spirits to receive that of Lady Withamstead.

It was clear that the good old woman wanted to be very condescending, if she did but know how; and her hopes and trusts that Mr. Barnsley and his daughter would not be less frequent visitors at Withamstead than they had always been, proved her of opinion that there was more distance between them as lord and squire, than as squire and squire; for with respect to the election, Holloway had strictly kept to the neutrality affected by Lord Shoreham,—prolonging his visit in Shropshire to avoid entanglements on either side. Lady Withamstead terminated her formal recipe-like epistle with the expression of a wish that the first visit paid by Margaret, after her recovery, might be to Withamstead Hall; and it was plain that her only regret in presenting to Miss Barnsley the best respects of 'her young people,' was the impossibility of setting them forth with all their new dignities, as 'the Hon. Misses Holloway.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

So much having been said of the Barnsleys, it is time that something should be known of Sir Henry Woodgate;—to whom these latter misfortunes of Stokeshill were in some degree attributable.

Sir Henry, great grandson of old Sir Ralph, was two years old at the period his father attained his majority and annihilated the entail of the property;—being the offspring of a boyish marriage between Richard the son of Sir Richard, and Clara d'Esterre, an almost portionless ward and relative of the old baronet. Young Woodgate, renounced by his family, and without the means of maintenance for his wife and child, consented to give the necessary signatures in order to preserve these two helpless beings from destitution; and the sacrifice was fully repaid; for he did not two years survive the event, having fallen in the very first action in which his regiment was engaged, after disembarking in the Peninsula. Little Harry and his young mother would consequently have been left without any other provision than the small pension of a cornet's widow, but for the reconciliation her husband's concessions had extorted from Sir Ralph and his son.

Affording an unhappy illustration of the evil influence of the feudal system, the Woodgates had for centuries past contemplated nothing in the world but themselves and their belongings,—Stokeshill and their family pride. Stokeshill was gone,—their pride alone remained to them; and this it was, rather than any benevolent feeling, which determined Sir Richard,—(for old Sir Ralph survived the break-up of the family even a shorter space than his grandson), to bestow a home upon the widow and orphan. Stokeshill Place was not yet disposed of. Every other acre of the family property was sacrificed immediately on the destruction of the entail; but they clung to Stokeshill; and even after levies and executions rendered it impossible to retain possession, circumstances seemed to oppose their departure. No purchaser could be found for an estate having a very involved title, the mansion on which required as great an outlay for reparation as might have produced a handsome modern

house; and little Harry was nearly five years old, when his grandfather at length signed, sealed, and delivered the deed, and Barnsley the purchase money, which completed the transfer of Stokeshill.

At the period of Harry's arrival there, the family consisted of his grandfather Sir Richard, Lady Woodgate, the venerable widow of Sir Ralph, and Agnes the only sister of his unfortunate father. To Mrs. Woodgate, these relations were fully known, her orphan childhood having been passed at Stokeshill Place; and she entertained an equal indifference towards Sir Richard, (a man soured by mortifications,) his venerable and benevolent mother, and Agnes, who, in the earlier ages of the house would have been a nun, pensive and holy, and even now, amid all the humiliations of the Woodgates, was as a spirit of peace haunting the old manor.

To each of these generations, meanwhile, the young child, their future representative, was an object of intense interest. The old lady seemed to hold it a sufficient merit that he would prolong the name of Woodgate, the name of her husband and his ancestors, among future generations. The peevish grandfather, putting his trust rather in the endowments of his race, than in the personal qualifications of their last offspring, looked upon the boy as destined to renovate the tarnished blazon of the Hand and Flower; while Agnes, young and tender-hearted, loved him as all that remained to her of her brother, as all she had to occupy her blighted affections. Her mother had been long dead; and the deference-demanding age of her grandmother, and petulance of her morose father, formed no claims on her tenderness in opposition to those of little Harry.

Even his mother, her cousin Clara, was no rival in the affections of Miss Woodgate. Clara was of far more fiery clay, and modelled in a very different mould from her own;—a Creole, born at the Havannah, of a marriage between Captain d'Esterre, a favourite nephew of Sir Ralph, and a Spanish lady of some distinction, who died shortly after giving her birth.

It was about the period of Sir Richard's marriage that Captain d'Esterre, desperately wounded in one of the glorious actions under Rodney, came to die under his uncle's roof; and obtained on his death-bed from Sir Ralph and the

Woodgate family, a promise that his orphan girl should be reared and educated with Agnes. A few thousand pounds formed the dowry of the little Creole, whose deep-toned Spanish beauty already gave token of the charms by which, in after years, she attracted and attached the heir of impoverished Stokeshill; and as she grew to womanhood, the passions of a tropical country were seen to sparkle in Clara's radiant eyes. But unluckily more than one evil instinct was mingled with the sprightliness of her character. Her union with the last scion of the house of Woodgate was chiefly suggested by a desire to thwart the family. Irritated by the pains they took to impress upon her mind the importance of Dick Woodgate when a schoolboy of ten years old, she had exerted herself, half-sport, half-malice, to instil a passion into his boyish heart;—a passion which grew till it made her his wife, and left her his widow.

Agnes, to whom the violence of her cousin's character was only too well known, grieved scarcely less over her brother's marriage than over his death, which so shortly followed. But when three years afterwards the young widow returned to Stokeshill, her ambitions withered, her small fortune dissipated, Miss Woodgate trusted, that instead of the hard heart being rendered harder by adversity, the distresses of the wife and the hopes of the mother might have breathed a better spirit into Clara. The beauty of the noble, dark-haired boy, her nephew, induced her to believe that the mother of so hopeful a son would be too much absorbed in him for cabals against 'the abbess and sister Agnes,' the names by which, in former days, Clara had been accustomed to designate Lady Woodgate and herself.

But Clara, though grown more wary, was not grown a jot more amiable. Her influence over the mind of old Sir Richard became as great as it had been over his son. His aged mother and gentle daughter soon became subordinates in the house. Mrs. Woodgate was at the head of every thing. Mrs. Woodgate's opinion was to be paramount; not as the widow of his son, but as the mother of his heir. Believing that it was by her influence Dick had been persuaded to sacrifice the entail, Sir Richard felt that strong compensation was owing to her for the injury sustained by herself and her son.

The amiable Lady Woodgate bore with silent dignity having her place in the family taken from her at nearly eighty years of age,—sustained by the recollection that the blood of her beloved Sir Ralph was flowing in the veins of the imperious Creole; while Agnes, feeling more on the high-minded old lady's account than on her own, pursued, without a murmur, her round of duties; feeding the hungry and healing the sick of Stokeshill,—transcribing her peevish father's letters, or waiting upon the whimsies of his gout.

The affairs of the family, meanwhile, grew daily more involved under Sir Richard's mal-administration; and when, at length, he announced that he had found a purchaser for his estate in the person of a schoolfellow of his late brother Everard, his aged mother was well content to rise and go forth into a land of strangers. Stokeshill was already desecrated in her eyes by the incursions of bailiffs and sheriff's officers. Westerton, which had rejected her son from its representation, was an eyesore to her. Kent, with its white hills and green hopgardens, ceased to seem her own beloved county; and having bound up her grey hairs under her cap, and leaning on Agnes for support, she led forth her great grandson from the abode of his ancestors, which, for more than half a century, had been her home.

After four years of obscurity and adversity, the re-opening of the long-closed continent enabled Sir Richard Woodgate to remove his family to a country where their fortunes would be ameliorated or at least their poverty pass unnoticed. Harry was then in his twelfth year, the venerable lady in her eighty-fourth; and though many sons might have scrupled at imposing upon her so great a change of habits and climate, Lady Woodgate would neither hear of being left behind, nor of affording an obstacle to projects tending to bestow a more liberal education on her grandson. Her jointure was an object in their common income; her presence a protection to Agnes; and they were soon all settled together in a commodious though gloomy old hotel at Ghent.

The resident families of ancient Belgian noblesse, though proverbially inaccessible to English travellers, relented in favour of the Woodgates. There was something so imposing in the venerable aspect of the octogenarian grandmother, something so touching in Agnes, so striking in Mrs. Wood-

gate, so interesting in Harry, that they passed over the peevish insignificance of Sir Richard, and for once opened their hearts and houses to an English family, equal in caste to themselves, and depressed to the level of their own broken fortunes. The old Comte van Pierrsen, governor of Ghent, used to say that the Woodgates reminded him of some distinguished family picture by his countryman Vandyck; a resemblance which the admixture of Spanish blood in the veins of two of its members tended to establish.

Two years elapsed in this dignified species of exile. Harry was acquiring those accomplishments which a continental education seldom fails to bestow; while the good old lady seemed to lay down a faculty for every one of those displayed by her great grandson. Deprived of sight, she would sit by the fire in winter, in the sunshine in summer, listening to Miss Woodgate's subdued voice, as she read some book of piety; or reciting for Harry's amusement some legendary history of the former grandeur of the Woodgates; when suddenly a great change was wrought in the family by the death of a distant relative, the godmother of Agnes, who bequeathed to her a fortune of ten thousand pounds. Miss Woodgate was now thirty, alienated from worldly pleasures, engrossed by the well-being of her family; and those who had so long disposed of her existence, now set about disposing of her property. Sir Richard congratulated himself that he had attained the means of carrying on a lawsuit he had long been anxious to commence; while Mrs. Woodgate announced that they must quit Ghent and pass a cheerful winter at Brussels in society more agreeable.

But, for the first time in her life, Agnes was firm. Miss Woodgate expressed in calm but decided terms, her resolution to expend two-thirds of the income, thus unexpectedly accruing to her, upon the education at Eton and Oxford of her nephew; leaving the remainder to accumulate for his further advancement in life. Seldom, however, has so disinterested a distribution of property been met with so much opposition. Sir Richard and his daughter-in-law seemed to fancy themselves as ill-used, as if Agnes had devoted her fortune to the maintenance of a lap-dog; and her sole encouragement in her noble intentions emanated from her venerable granddame, who whispered that the boy would live

to reward her, by raising from the dust the fallen name of Woodgate.

Harry, meanwhile, who by the desire of aunt Agnes was kept in ignorance of the extent of his obligations, proceeded at once to Eton, and by his classical proficiency attained almost immediate distinction. Twice every year he returned from England to his family, increased in stature and developed in intelligence; to listen to the now faltering adjurations of the high-born matron, to the tender admonitions of the gentle aunt, and the stirring lessons of the more quick-witted mother. Old Lady Woodgate spoke of the world as an arena where honours were to be striven for, in order to support the ancient lustre of his decaying house;—his mother, as a theatre, where the ablest actor becomes manager of the company; dispensing the allotment of parts, and engaging the monopoly of benefits; but Agnes, as a place where high station is the meed of high acquirements, and affords the means of conferring benefits upon mankind. The last lesson sank deepest; for something of the generous nature of his unfortunate young father clung to the dispositions of Henry Woodgate. But by the time he attained to man's estate, the venerable matron was lying in the Protestant cemetery of Ghent; while the younger one had renounced the name of Woodgate and the weariness of her existence as holder of Sir Richard's leading-strings, to figure at the court of Brussels as Countess van Pierrsen.

The disconsolate Baronet could scarcely forgive this desertion. To be left with none to storm at but his humble daughter, was a severe trial; more particularly when, on Henry's leaving college, Agnes fully supported the young man's determination to see something of the world before he made choice of a profession; and provided him with the means of visiting the various courts and countries of Europe.

Two years afterwards, as Harry was sledging away a hard winter with considerable *éclat* at Vienna, a letter from aunt Agnes apprised him that he was a baronet, and herself alone in the world. She did not think it necessary to add, that the last illness of the late Sir Richard might be dated from the perusal of a letter from his kinsman, Mr. Sul-

livan, of Hawkhurst Hall; in which, among other items of Kentish news, he related that Mr. Barnsley, of Stokeshill Place, was pricked for the office of High Sheriff of the county.

CHAPTER XIX.

The loss of Sir Richard was in every sense a gain to his surviving family. When the vain, useless man, who had never stirred a finger for its benefit, was laid in the dust, it appeared that, on the sale of Stokeshill Place, old Dobbs of Westerton had persuaded him to insure his life, as some compensation to the grandson deprived of his patrimony; and Sir Henry, in addition to his grandfather's small income of six hundred a year, now found himself in possession of a sum of fifteen thousand pounds.

The explanations consequent upon these events, put him also in possession, in detail, of the munificent proceedings of his aunt. It became necessary for her support to resume the income of five hundred a year hitherto devoted to his use, of which he no longer stood in need; and how could Sir Henry sufficiently admire and love the generosity which had kept from him the secret of his obligations?—Agnes, whom his mother had represented to him as a yea-nay creature, respectable only in its harmlessness, proved to be a woman of the highest mind,—of the deepest feeling;—who had devoted her youth to the solace of two superannuated relatives, and her fortune to promote the welfare of the only son of her only brother.

Eager to repay in deference and affection the obligations he had received from this excellent friend, he insisted on passing with her at Ghent the first three months after his accession to the title; to prevent the painful consciousness of loneliness we experience on the sudden cessation of even an irksome personal attendance. In spite of his grandfather's ungracious temper, Sir Henry felt convinced that Agnes would miss him; and as she expressed an intention of passing at Ghent the two remaining years of her lease, he chose to bear her company during the first winter. By this sacrifice, he obtained leisure for the digestion of his plans,

and afforded an opportunity to aunt Agnes to reap the reward of her generosity, in surveying the development of his faculties and virtues. Vainly did the Countess van Pierrsen, now a leading *intrigante* of the court of Brussels, strive to entice him away by a brilliant description of the honours awaiting him at court; he chose to dedicate himself to the relative to whom he stood so largely indebted.

To the liberality of his education, Sir Henry attributed the endowments to the possession of which blindness was impossible. There was a struggling spirit within him which looked proudly forward, confident in its own resources. He was conscious of intense passions as well as lofty capacities,—but he felt himself master over both. Unwilling to rush hastily into the arena and snatch the first laurel-branch that presented itself, barren or fertile, he knew his hour must come. The loss of a few months mused away with the unworldly Agnes, could oppose no important detriment to his progress in life.

Such was the position of the young baronet, when a letter arrived from his college friend, Brereton's father, his own kinsman, Mr. Sullivan, of Hawkhurst Hill, acquainting him of the vacancy likely to occur in the representation of Westerton.

'You have but to show yourself here,' wrote the enemy of John Barnsley, 'to excite a universal reaction in your favour; and I own it would gratify me to have for my coadjutor, the representative of a family so long respected in the county of Kent.'

Sir Henry submitted this startling question absolutely to the disposal of aunt Agnes. His compliance with Sullivan's invitation must produce immediate disappointment to herself; and he would willingly have renounced all, rather than cause one painful emotion to her affectionate heart. It was not, however, from any selfish consideration, that Agnes advised him to postpone his project of getting into parliament. She conceived that he had not yet formed ties of sufficient magnitude in England to afford the support indispensable to every man entering upon public life. Sir Henry had no family connexions to bespeak indulgence; and Agnes who, with all her adoration, was not blind to his defects, saw in him an abruptness of manner likely to give

offence. Attributing this surliness to his early consciousness of the inferiority of his fortunes to his social position, she fancied it would gradually disappear, now that he found himself in possession of a handsome competence.

But Mr. Sullivan was not to be discouraged by the courteous letters of refusal despatched by Sir Henry. He wrote again. Lord Withamstead's peerage was not yet gazetted;—there was leisure for second thoughts; and trusting to the frailties of human nature to strengthen the influence of his arguments, the shrewd old gentleman suggested, that though under any circumstances it was Stokeshill that was to send its members to parliament, the question in the eye of the county was 'New times or old?'—'Money or rank?'—'Barnsley or Woodgate?'

Agnes Woodgate could not resist such an appeal. By the remote rumours which had reached her from Stokeshill, she judged Barnsley to be a mean-minded man, a grinder of her poor, a chastiser of her sick. Care had been taken to impress Sir Henry and herself with the enormity of his innovations; his barbarism in making rough places plain, and crooked straight, among certain ruinous remains, consecrated by legends of the Hand and Flower. They thought of him as a *ci-devant* attorney, intent only on preventing the name of Woodgate from being had in remembrance in the land; and scarcely had they come to the conclusion of Sullivan's letter, announcing that he was about to take his seat in the senate of the country, as 'Barnsley of Stokeshill,' than they rescinded their former objections; and the next night saw Sir Henry Woodgate embark in the Ostend packet for England.

He was to proceed direct to Hawkhurst; and it afforded him pleasure, on arriving there, to find that Sullivan Brereton was staying with his Neapolitan friend Lady Shoreham, at Wynnex Abbey. The day following his arrival, having ridden over to announce his intentions, he unwittingly intruded into the presence of Margaret Barnsley, in the library; and soon afterwards came a second time in collision with her, at the dinner-party preceding the festival at the Abbey.

It may be observed, that in an electioneering contest,—

as in other scratches,—ardour comes with anxiety,—and passion with pain. Sir Henry, who arrived in Kent with a very moderate spirit of antagonism against Barnsley, was soon pricked here, and twitted there, into the utmost inveteracy. Nor was it a mere electioneering fever which inflamed his virulence. That visit to Stokeshill village had done wonders, by reviving effaced recollections, and calling up spirits from the vasty deep of the past. Long as he had reconciled himself to his forfeiture of the family estates, his impatience of Barnsley's occupancy of the home of his ancestors, was now as vehement as it was unreasonable. The intoxication of popularity is an excitement to which no young heart is inaccessible; and the shouts of the market-place, and toasts of the Hand and Flower, overheated his imagination. On his first appearance in the county society, the deference due to one of the most ancient families in Kent, welcomed him back cordially to his place; on his first appearance in his former feof, the infatuation connected with his name, welcomed him back to a place no longer his own; —while the Mrs. Hawkinses of Stokeshill, and Timminses of Westerton, kissed the hem of his garments, and the dust under his feet; and old nurse Woods of Woodsend, fell upon his neck and wept aloud for thankfulness at his return.

At Naples, Rome, Vienna, Munich,—unconscious of all this sympathy,—Sir Henry had been content to know himself the last representative of a decayed family—reckless whence he came, or whither he was going,—content in the enjoyment of his youth, health and faculties. Kent, was nothing to him *there*, — Stokeshill, nothing, — Barnsley, nothing! The blue sky,—the fertile land,—antiquity, with its treasures,—posterity with its chimeras, dazzled his eyes with their enjoyments. The world was all before him where to choose; and he almost forgot that it contained a Stokeshill Place.

But he knew and recollected it now!—Not all the maps of Mogg, or charts of Arrowsmith, could show a spot to vie with its importance in his estimation: the very soul within him yearned after Stokeshill. That one parish, with its chivalrous associations with his family, seemed to contain his Palladium. Riveted by such a tie to the soil of England, he felt that he should become worthier to bear a part in the

legislation of the land; that, *pro aris et focis*, he could fight a good fight. But, while 'lord of his presence and no land beside,' what was he but a loose pebble rolling hither and thither with every ebb and flow of the tide of public life! He was about to become a London man,—a club man,—a homeless man; and the conclusion of his career would be to creep like an insect into the discarded shell of some other crustaceous animal. He must hire some 'genteel residence in a sporting county,'—some abominable *rus in urbe* at Fulham or Edmonton; while John Barnsley the attorney remained sole lord and suzerain of deserted Stokeshill Place!

With such feelings he repaired to Wynnex; with such feelings listened, day after day, to the solemn impertinences of Brereton, and slang inuendoes of the young Lord and his knowing uncles. The Drewes, who for twelve years past had been nursing and keeping warm their resentments against the supposed estrangers of their late brother's confidence; Brereton, stung home by the notion that Barnsley was whispering about the neighbourhood the tale of his dismissal of Edward Sullivan; conspired to stimulate Sir Henry into so thorough a contempt of the Barnsley family, that he had some difficulty in maintaining a decent civility towards either father or daughter, when he encountered them under the roof of Lady Shoreham.

The election added fuel to the flames. When the 'No Barnsley!'—'No pettifoggers!'—'No nobodies!' chalked up from the north toll bar of Westerton to the south, by the emissaries of Dobbs and Snobbs, were met by the emissaries of Harpenden and Hill with 'No Woodgates!'—No skulkers!'—'No pauper baronets!'—his wrath rose, as though Barnsley himself were the aggressor. The mud-flinging wit of an English election was new to his ears polite; he knew not that being called names was an essential preparative to being called to the House;—and when told to his face by Mr. Tallow-Chandler Wright, or rather when hearing told *across* his face to the free and independent electors of Westerton, that his great-grandfather was an out-at-elbows,—his grandfather a jail-bird,—his father a nonentity,—his mother a frog-eating Papist, he forgot that 'all was fair at an election.' He was in a furious rage, and all his rage was directed against Barnsley.

But if Sir Henry's wrath waxed hot within him, even when able to despatch a few lines, bidding the anxious Agnes 'be of good cheer,—that he was sure of his election;'—what was it when compelled to retract his words, and own himself a vanquished man,—a man vanquished by the attorney! It was not till the following morning, however, that he awoke to the full consciousness of his disappointment,—his mortification, the mortification of all Stokeshill,—the disappointment of Aunt Agnes!

It was in the midst of this disagreeable contemplation of the uncertainty of all sublunary things, that he was roused by vague rumours of a 'lark' projected by the Parson and Gus to mar the effect of the chairing of the successful candidate. So far as regarded a mere vulgar, electioneering, practical joke, he had now begun to understand that 'all was fair.' But when Helen Sullivan, with her usual frank decision of manner, told him that his own repute was likely to be compromised by the daring lawlessness of the two knowing gentlemen who had undertaken to head the faction in his name, Woodgate felt that he must come forward promptly in his own defence. He mounted his horse,—he rode off to Westerton. However contrary to custom such a proceeding, he resolved to be on the spot in person for the defence of his pitiful adversary.

Sir Henry was just in time!—The Parson had been overtly and Gus surreptitiously at work, reviving old enthusiasms in their favour among the ragamuffins of the town;—scamps who had baited badgers with them thirty years before, and broke fences with them, twenty;—and who had been admiring the recital of their coaching and smoking exploits,—their renown in the ring,—their standing on the turf, and in the Sunday newspapers, for the last ten. The influence of the house of Drewe, dormant during the fogrum reign of the late Lord, and the long minority of the present, seemed suddenly revived at Westerton; and the populace prepared themselves to fling their caps into the air, and anything in nature into the face of ''torney Barnsley,' at the suggestion of Gus and his brother.

A faction is easily organized. The very stones of Westerton seemed ready to array themselves against Barnsley, by whom they had been so long kept in a state of

subordination. Scarcely, in short, had the new member issued in his curule chair from the Old Angel, than a hooting and hissing mob of beings, derived apparently from the Angel's antipodes, seemed to surround him. To hootings succeeded peltings;—hootings which put him in fear of his life, and peltings in peril;—till at length one of his cheeks, laid open by some missile, was streaming with blood,—and the constables, though reinforced by a swearing-in which had kept old Closeman half the morning at work, were beginning to give way, when the roarings and bellowings of the crowd of—'No Barnsley!'—'Down with the Attorney!'—were suddenly converted from a minor key of five flats, to a major key of six sharps; and bland acclamations of 'Woodgate for ever!' resounded in the air. Sir Henry rode up to the field of action, just as Barnsley was knocked senseless out of the chair!

It was Woodgate's own proposal to Barnsley, (after having seated him safely under the hands of Mr. Squill in the Old Angel parlour, for his wounds to be dressed and his wrongs *re*dressed,) to accompany him in his carriage for protection, as far as Stokeshill Place!—Such a proposal inflicted a pang on him who received, scarcely less than upon him who gave it utterance. Sir Henry had, in fact, no means of appreciating the extent of the 'ungrateful injury' perpetrated against Barnsley. The mob was to *him* a mob,—a sea of faces, resembling those of any other assemblage of Toms, Dicks, and Bobs. But to Barnsley every face of that reviling multitude had a physiognomy of its own. *This* blackguard he had saved from the treadmill,—*that* from the pillory; yet they now recollected only the sourness of the bread and water, and bitterness of the durance vile, for which their severer sentence had been commuted.—The wife of one Tom was receiving double allowance from the parish at his suggestion; another Dick's son had been apprenticed to a chimney-sweeper by his humanity, when he might have been whipped for stealing;—while Bob,—or rather, how many Bobs of that perverse generation,—had been paid twelvepence a day by him, for many hundreds of days, for breaking stones on the King's highway: and now all they wanted was to break his head!

Be a magistrate!—toil for the good of your parish—of

your county;—enlarge your workhouses,—people your penitentiaries,—make heavy your tolls, and light your judgments on the bench; but do not expect to be rewarded with the gratitude of the multitude at a contested election.

CHAPTER XX.

There occurs now and then a crisis in human life capable of evoking a sixth sense, such as the one said by the initiated in animal magnetism to be called into action by somnambulism. The first ten minutes at sea, the last ten previously to a severe operation, appear to develop instincts previously dormant; and to a criminal proceeding to execution this susceptibility may possibly afford an unsuspected source of anguish.

John Barnsley and Sir Henry Woodgate, as they proceeded together in the chariot of the former from the Old Angel to Stokeshill Place, were certainly conscious of a thousand struggling emotions hitherto unnoticed in their bosoms. The pride of Sir Henry prompted him to offer the protection of his companionship to the wounded man; the pride of Barnsley determined him to accept the offer. For Barnsley did not choose Sir Henry to suppose him afraid of witnessing the extent of his influence. He resolved to show his indifference to the intemperate partizanship of the populace. Firm in the consciousness of his value, strong as a penal statute in his own equity, he prepared to go forth and face the blatant beast of popular ingratitude, with a vigour of magnanimous disdain worthy of Arthur the Duke.

But though scorning to appear humiliated by the protection afforded by the presence of Woodgate, while Sir Henry bowed from the carriage window to the rolling billows of an ocean of heads in the Market Place, and shook his uplifted hand as a token to them to repress the vehemence of their demonstrations; though he even strove to get up a conversation on indifferent subjects when, having left the town behind them, the carriage took the road to Stokeshill,—the thing was impossible. A thousand flurrying thoughts crowded into Barnsley's mind, at that moment, to which he had not leisure to afford a just analysis. His

wounds were smarting,—his head and heart were aching,—a new sense of his situation seemed to beset him. He did not feel altogether the master of his own property. A superior was seated by his side. The Woodgates were, once more, all in all. This world seemed made for Cæsar!

But if such were the gathering emotions of the callous man of business, what may not be inferred of those of the impassioned and high-minded Sir Henry Woodgate; when, having wound among the hedges, on the sprays of which the robin was striking up his admonitory autumnal song, they passed the old lodge gates, through which he had so often cantered of yore on his favourite pony, while the venerable old servant who held the gate stood uncovered with his long white hair gently uplifted by the breeze, as the heir rode by!—Away they rolled along the now smooth road; crossed the bridge of which the parapet, *then* ruinous, was now newly and firmly cemented; and came in sight of Stokeshill Place. The old stone manor-house, its sober tint brightened by the setting sun that sparkled on its windows and cast a golden gleam across its portal, stood out in singular contrast with the tower of Stokeshill church, overgrown by the Virginian creeper which, crimsoned by autumnal frosts, seemed converted into a column of fire. Between the abode of the living and the abode of the dead, there intervened only a few ancient trees that looked like the gigantic guardians of the Place; while Margaret's flower-beds of dahlias and winter roses, brightened the scene with that spirit of feminine elegance, the last to linger on a spot, the first to embellish. But for that slight indication of a woman's presence, Sir Henry could have found it in his heart to lift up his voice and curse the place and its inmates!

The moment, it must be owned, was a trying one. *There* stood the abode in which his father and his father's ancestors, had seen the light. *There* the church under whose hallowed shelter their ashes were reposing, Even on his mother's side the name of the gallant d'Esterre combined to consecrate the place his own. Whatever station he held in the eyes of men was derived from Stokeshill. History defined his forefathers as the Woodgates of Stokeshill. The earth bore witness of them,—the air was instinct with their breath;—there they had lived,—there they had died!—There had

their households assembled to welcome home their bride;—there had their firstborn smiled upon them;—there had their grey heads been honoured,—there their death-bed soothed by the tenderness of their kindred and the prayers of the poor.—There had they pledged their wine-cup, in the hour of conviviality,—there drained their chalice of tears in the day of adversity.

What trace remained of them now?—a few hollow sepulchres, and the tattered banners drooping over their ashes!

Had Sir Henry been alone, he would perhaps have gnashed his teeth for bitternesss and beat his throbbing brows. But with the man—the enemy—the attorney—by his side, he laboured to subdue his feelings to more dignified calmness. A cold thrill ran through his frame, like the shivering that precedes high fever, as, with a forced smile, he observed on the fine autumn they were enjoying, and the good fortune of the hop-growers. There was foam upon his lip as he smiled; there was loathing in his voice as he made this insignificant remark. But Barnsley saw and heard only an attempt at courtesy, and replied with an obsequious alacrity worthy of his vulgar nature.

'You will do me the favour to alight, and give my daughter an opportunity of thanking you for the service you have done me?' said he, as they drew nearer to the house; and something of an irrepressible desire to look once more upon long-lost objects, instigated Sir Henry to bow in the affirmative, and relapse into mournful silence. He had not been at the trouble to inquire much into Barnsley's domestic history. He remembered a pleasing-looking girl at Wynnex Abbey who was said to be his daughter. He remembered having noticed, opposite to his own family monuments in Stokeshill church, a plain white marble tablet 'Sacred to the memory of Mary, the wife of J. Barnsley Esq. æt. 20,' with the device of a lily broken on its stem, above the inscription;—in which simple record there was something vaguely touching, which for a moment palliated his animosity. But it was neither of Mary nor of Margaret he was thinking now. Sir Henry was desirous only to impress on the mind of the attorney of Stokeshill, the triumphant member for Westerton, that there was no

trial he could inflict, capable of daunting or humiliating the spirit of a Woodgate.

Sir Henry was too much engrossed by his own feelings to notice the horror-struck air of the servant who came to the door to receive them, at the aspect of his master, (from whose forehead, the wound having been but hastily attended to, the blood had trickled and dried upon his cheek,) or the frivolous apologies of Barnsley that, his establishment being dispersed at Westerton, he could not receive his guest with becoming honours; as if Sir Henry had leisure to think, at such a moment, of footmen or butlers, man servants or maid servants.

'My dear Margaret,' cried Barnsley, throwing open the door of his daughter's sitting-room, 'I have brought you a gentleman to whom you must offer your thanks for having been instrumental in rescuing your father from considerable danger.'

Startled by this strange appeal, Margaret half rose from her couch to fix her wondering eyes upon her father and Sir Henry Woodgate; but only to sink down again overcome with emotion. Pale from recent illness, her cheek became blanched to deadlier paleness by the sight of her father's disfigurement. He was wounded!—He spoke of having been in danger!—Instead of welcoming Sir Henry Woodgate, she burst into tears.

'My dear girl,' said Barnsley, in a tone of compassionating superiority, 'there is really no occasion for all this agitation. I am quite safe you see,—quite well,—this wound is a mere scratch. What will Sir Henry Woodgate think of you, my dear, if you distress yourself in this way about such a trifle?'—

Margaret cared, just then, very little what Sir Henry thought of her; and it happened that Sir Henry thought of her not at all. Having retired to the window to avoid being a restraint on the meeting between the father and daughter, he was bringing to his remembrance that the room he stood in had been that of aunt Agnes; that it was there in his childhood, almost in his babyhood, he had visited her to be loved and caressed every morning. He could have even pointed out the spot on the wall where hung her deceased brother's picture, which she was in the habit of showing him as 'Poor

papa; and the corner of the chimney-piece to which she was accustomed to lift her nephew that he might take off with his own little hand, a marble greyhound, his favourite plaything.—And now young Agnes was a grave woman with silver hairs among her dark tresses,—an exile in a foreign land; and little Harry a strong man, and a stranger within his father's gates!

His soul was full, even to bursting; nor was his anguish lessened by the necessity of subjecting it to control. He began to feel that he had no business there; that having reconducted home the member, it was his business to depart; and turning towards the sofa, he saw Margaret, her mild eyes still wet with tears, sitting beside her father, his hand pressed in hers. There was no affectation,—no exaggeration in her sorrow. Her father had nearly fallen a victim to ingratitude and ill-usage; it was but natural she should weep. But when Sir Henry Woodgate turned sternly towards them to take leave, Margaret made a strong attempt to recover her composure; for she felt that there was too little in common between them, to admit of shedding tears in his presence.

'I must beg you, Sir Henry, to make due allowance for this young lady's weakness,' said her father, assuming as nearly as he could the jocular tone of his friend Closeman. 'My daughter is scarcely yet recovered from a dangerous fever, with which, as you may have heard, she was attacked at Wynnex; any fresh shock easily overpowers her nerves.'

'I have the more reason to apologize to Miss Barnsley for my intrusion,' observed Woodgate, involuntarily bending a favourable eye upon the frail and delicate beauty of the invalid. 'I am sorry,' he continued, addressing Margaret, 'that I shall be unable to convey to your friend, Miss Sullivan, a more flattering account of your recovery.' For, at that moment, as he fixed his eyes on the gently expressive countenance of the invalid, all that Helen Sullivan had said in her favour, when reproaching him with want of gallantry towards Margaret at the memorable Wynnex dinner-scene, recurred to his memory.

'Is not Helen gone into Norfolk?'—demanded Margaret, in a tone fluttered by the apprehension that her father might ascribe the inquiry to some latent feeling of interest about Edward.

'We all go to-morrow,' he replied, attributing Miss Barnsley's emotion to surprise at his indiscretion in referring to anything connected with Hawkhurst in her father's presence.

'You are acquainted then, with the Duke of Grantville?' inquired Barnsley.

'Connected. My grandfather was a cousin of the Brereton family.'

'True—very true, I had forgotten. I am a very bad hand at recollecting family connections. I never could manage to knock a pedigree into my head,' said Barnsley, jocosely.

Sir Henry could not help feeling that pedigree was the last topic likely to interest a Mr. Barnsley.

'Fortunately,' said he, with a bitter smile, 'it is one of those trifling subjects on which people are kind enough to spare one's memory. In these speculating times, the booksellers are at the trouble of printing half-a-dozen catalogues of one's aunts and cousins.'

Barnsley, hugging himself in the certainty that no one would be at the trouble of printing for him a list likely to produce such unsatisfactory associations, recurred to the Duke of Grantville.

'Very fine preserves, I am told, at Buckhurst Lodge?—said to be the best partridge-shooting in England?'

'I fancy so. I am not much of a sportsman,' replied Sir Henry, making a move with his hat, as if about to bid them good morning. 'There can be no occasion for my taking out your carriage again,' he continued, perceiving Barnsley's hand on the bell. 'Though not a sportsman, I am an excellent walker; and I should prefer making at once across the country for Hawkhurst, without returning through Westerton.'

'But, my dear Sir, there can be no difficulty about the carriage. The cross-road between Hawkhurst and my place is by no means so very bad. My coachman knows the holes about Lee Common, and will keep clear of them. I assure you, you have nothing to apprehend.'

'I was not acquainted with the holes at Lee Common,' said Woodgate, trying to muster a grim smile; 'but I *prefer* walking. I shall be at Hawkhurst in half an hour.'

'Not under three quarters, even if you knew the way;

and there are two turnings before you come to Lee Bridge, which you will find puzzling. Bless my soul! it is already half-past six. The Sullivans will have dined before you arrive. If I might presume, Sir Henry, to take the liberty, I should venture to request the honour——'

Woodgate hastily interrupted him. Much as he had borne that day, he was determined not to submit to the degradation of being asked to dinner by Barnsley.

'I am obliged to you, sir,' said he, stiffly; 'I dined early——'

'I am afraid you think it will be an inconvenience to us. You are mistaken, I assure you. No difference shall be made, if you are kind enough to take us in the rough.'

'I am no epicure,' said Sir Henry, looking nettled. 'I am as little capable of shunning a bad dinner as of eating two in a day.'

'I have deputed my friend Closeman to represent me at the dinner down yonder,' observed Barnsley, waxing familiar on so familiar a subject as dinner. 'After all that has passed, I thought I had enough for the present of my constituents. They have taught me a lesson I shall remember the longest day I have to live. I begin to envy you, Sir Henry, having got your neck out of the noose. I really congratulate you.'

'You can scarcely congratulate me, sir, on the loss of that which, four-and-twenty hours ago we both thought worthy of contention,' said Woodgate, more and more haughtily. 'But it is late. Allow me to take my leave.'

He turned with a profound bow towards Miss Barnsley, who made a strong but useless effort to rise; and blushed as she muttered an incoherent farewell.

'I am exceedingly mortified, Sir Henry, that I cannot persuade you to take the carriage,' resumed her father, officiously opening the door for his guest.—'Good morning. I fear I cut a sorry figure,' he continued, fancying the scornful eye of Sir Henry was fixed upon his bandages. 'Not exactly in a state for bumper toasts,—eh, Sir Henry?—I may wish myself joy that my convivial duties will fall to the share of my jovial friend Closeman of Cinnamon Hall.'

CHAPTER XXI.

Twenty times in the course of that evening and the following day, did Margaret recall and reconsider every syllable uttered by Sir Henry Woodgate and her father, during that memorable visit! To every word spoken by the former, she reverted with regret;—to every word spoken by her father, with mortification. Sir Henry had been at no pains to disguise his antipathy to the family. Perhaps it would not be natural for him to *like* them;—but she could not bear that he should *despise* her father.

Never had Mr. Barnsley appeared to less advantage than under the excitement of recent outrage and present vexation. He was moreover in a state of physical suffering from the attack he had undergone. Very early in the evening, he felt ill enough to retire to bed; nor was the violence of his headache much abated, when, next morning, he had the satisfaction of perusing the following statement in the Kentish Chronicle—

'Westerton.—Wednesday 23rd.—We have to record, with regret, a most disgraceful outrage which occurred yesterday in our ancient borough, hitherto remarkable for urbanity, good order, and decorum. Certain of our townspeople, indignant at the infamous corruption openly practised during the recent contest, and eager to rebut the ignominy which the proceedings of two individuals of the names of Harpenden and Hill have brought upon the borough of Westerton, assembled at an early hour in the vicinity of the pothouse from which it was supposed our new member would issue for his chairing, armed with sticks and stones, and evidently with hostile intentions. Under such circumstances, it would have been perhaps more to the credit of this gentleman's good feeling had he spared us the disgraceful scene that followed, by sacrificing his own share of the vanities of the ceremony. But Mr. Barnsley, it seems, clung to the exhibition of the day! and, though manifestly suffering under considerable depression of spirits and with his face overspread by an unnatural paleness, about four o'clock, after much delay and disappointment, preceded by the extra number of special constables sworn in for his protection, the doughty member

made his appearance. A scene ensued that beggars description! Cries of "No Barnsley!" rent the skies—"Down with all nigger-drivers."—"Where's Bill Sandys?"—(an unfortunate youth, now undergoing seven years' transportation for poaching in the Wynnex preserves, convicted on the evidence of Mr. Barnsley).—Dead cats,—dogs,—offal,—and other missiles of the most revolting description, were hurled in the face of the unpopular member. Very early in the affray, a constable in the discharge of his duty, received a blow on the temple with a bludgeon, and was carried off senseless to the infirmary. Two other men, ringleaders of the mob, fell stunned and bathed in blood, Our respected Mayor, with Jeremiah Closeman, Esq. of Cinnamon Lodge, a county magistrate, having arrived on the spot, the Riot Act was about to be read; when, fortunately, the timely appearance of Sir Henry Woodgate, Bart. (the defeated member) gave a new turn to the excitement of the multitude; and leaning on his arm, the unfortunate Mr. Barnsley, after experiencing several severe contusions, was supported into the Angel. Surgical advice was called in. It was pronounced, on examination of his wounds by an eminent practitioner of the town (Osman Squills, Esq.), that the unfortunate gentleman might be removed without danger to his mansion at Stokeshill Place; and exactly twenty-seven minutes before six o'clock, the honourable member and his recent opponent entered together the chaise of the former gentleman, and drove the back way out of the Angel yard, amid the acclamations of such of the mob as had not yet quitted the spot. We lament, however, to state that in the course of the evening, after the departure of Mr. Closeman to his seat at Cinnamon Lodge, and the dispersion of the constables, the populace re-assembled in the market-place; and having torn up the hustings before the aid of the proper authorities could be procured, made a large bonfire in the centre of the market-place; over which was suspended on a pole an effigy personifying the unfortunate Mr. Barnsley.

'The cheers and shouts, of "Woodgate for ever!" with which these outrages were accompanied, sufficiently indicate the spirit producing such unusual excitement in the tranquil town of Westerton. Had not the owners of the two great factories, Whisthin, the carpet weaver of North

Lane, and Thurlow, proprietor of the cotton-mills at King's Bank, rung in their workmen an hour earlier than usual (both of these gentlemen being strongly in the Barnsley interest), it is impossible to guess what might have been the next movement of the rioters. We regret to record that, at one time, the market sheds and benches, piled up at one extremity of the market-place, were in great danger of falling a prey to the flames.

'It is but justice, however, to the inhabitants of Westerton to add, that a considerable portion of these violent proceedings may be traced to their disappointment of a ludicrous pageant which had been announced, by general report, was to precede the chairing of the member, under the auspices of two honourable gentlemen, who are supposed to have grounds of family enmity against him. This indecent, but diverting scene was prevented at the suggestion of the leading gentlemen of the Hawkhurst Committee; but it might have been wiser to gratify the frolics of the people by a piece of harmless pleasantry than to have provoked the alarming (and it may prove in the sequel fatal) outrages that disturbed the harmony of the day.'

'ADDITIONAL PARTICULARS.

'(*From our own Correspondent.*)

'We learn (from a confidential source), that after quitting the Angel Inn, the two gentlemen whose contest has excited such an unprecedented ferment in the county, proceeded straight to Stokeshill Place for a private conference, where, after considerable discussion, in the presence of lawyers employed on either side, Sir Henry Woodgate consented to withdraw his notice of petition, upon Mr. Barnsley pledging himself to retire from the borough in the event of a dissolution. This is handsome on both sides; and under such auguries we trust that a more liberal feeling will be displayed towards the unfortunate member during his temporary representation of the borough of Westerton.'

And it was to obtain such satisfaction as this that Barnsley had expended upwards of five thousand pounds, and received a blow on the cheek-bone producing exfoliation of the jaw! After all that had been said, sworn, written, and vociferated

against him; after all the littlenesses—the more treasonable for their truth—which had been brought forward; the cracks and flaws of pedigree exposed; the peculiarities of manner ridiculed; the peculiarities of dress caricatured; the suffering attorney felt as sore within his skin, as though he had passed a month upon the red-hot bed of Guatimozin!

To such griefs Margaret had no consolation to afford. She listened patiently while her father recited as circumstantial a narrative of his afflictions as he thought it desirable she should be acquainted with; but there was no argument by which she could hope to pacify his resentment. It was undeniable that, for twenty years, he had been devoting himself to the service of his fellow-countrymen, without earning a jot of their affection in return. Where was the fault? in her father or in mankind? It was not for her to consider too curiously. He was uneasy—he was unwell; she could only sit by his side, prompt in affirmation and commiseration, whenever he seemed to ask for them. She had never seen her father so desponding before; and old Mrs. Molyneaux went shaking her head with repressed satisfaction and pretended sympathy into the servants' hall, hinting that 'poor gentleman, Mr. Barnsley, seemed quite overset in his mind by being made member of parliament.'

Certain it was, that though little remained of his wounds besides a strip of court plaster, he appeared to be completely unhinged. Parliament indeed was prorogued, till after the holidays; the neighbourhood was broken up; Hawkhurst empty; the Abbey empty; as if all Kent had made up its mind to pass its Christmas elsewhere. There was nothing to amuse—nothing to occupy poor Barnsley. No Edward Sullivan to drop in to a family dinner, and endure his squirearchical potter through the evening; no Wynnex executorship supplying farmers to be dunned; outbuildings to be repaired; trespassers to be prosecuted; bailiffs to be bullied. After the sneering hesitation evinced by Lord Shoreham about signing the release, Barnsley scorned to show the most acuminated tip of his nose on his Lordship's premises. He would have discovered a poacher wiring hares in the Wynnex preserves, or an old woman pulling faggots out of the hedges, and not given information against them.

He would have held his peace, let whoever would prove inclined to break it against the Drewes.

Still less was Barnsley disposed to fill up his idle moments by visits to Westerton, or exertions in the village of Stokeshill. Town and country had done their worst against him, and he chose to show them he remembered it. Having gained nothing else by his election, it was hard if he might not make the most of his resentment.

Every day he sat with his daughter and her governess after dinner, with his plate full of empty walnut-shells, and his head full of vague reminiscences; while Miss Winston revolved in her mind whether he intended to bestow his usual Christmas dole of blankets and coals upon the poor, and Margaret whether the wreck of matter or the crush of worlds would suffice to rouse him from his present apathy. She could have felt it in her heart to wish his favourite mare might fall lame, the rot make its appearance in his pet flock of South Downs, or the dry rot in his rafters, so he would but once more break forth into the warmth of his former vivacity. But alas! there was no speculation in those eyes, which he bent upon the marble chimney-piece as if endowed with the faculty which is said to see into a millstone; when one day, at dessert, John appeared with a letter in his hand, with the customary lacquey laconism of, 'Waits for an answer.'

Margaret's eyes naturally fell upon her father's face while he perused the epistle—probably some formal invitation. But the moment she saw a flush overspread his now sallow face, and a gleam of enthusiasm light up his now lack-lustre eyes, she knew that it was a letter of business. There was a tone of returning glee in his voice, as he desired John to bid the man wait, and place lights in the library, that he might write an answer. Yet the epistle was only a despatch from Messrs. Harpenden and Hill; and even Barnsley, though roused up at the summons as the lion sniffing a prey afar off, saw in its contents only the prospect of a job, a negotiation, a shred of parchment; little surmising that in that letter, brief and insignificant as it was, existed the fiat of his future destinies and those of his whole family.

The intelligence contained in the epistle of the Westerton lawyers simply regarded the real estate of their late lamented

client, Jeremiah Dodwell, D.D., F.L.S., and F.S.A., rector of Wynnex, the tidings of whose demise had been announced to an afflicted county by the Kentish Chronicle, in the same paper which circulated the first day's polling at the Westerton election. The lynx-eyed housekeeper was, according to previous expectation, both executrix and residuary legatee; but the old doctor had commanded the sale of his estates, for the purpose of division between his illiterate associate and certain learned societies. Among the property thus to be disposed of, happened to be a certain farm, once included within the ring fence of Stokeshill, and purchased off from under some execution served upon old Sir Ralph Woodgate, for a sum of four thousand pounds.

Now Maplehurst, the farm in question, was attached to the vast continent of the Manor of Hawkhurst by an isthmus, consisting of a copse and turnip field: and this desirable acquisition was accordingly offered for sale by private contract to Squire Barnsley, at the suggestion of the housekeeper, and per acquiescence of their common solicitor. Parson Drewe, who was already promoted to the rectory of Wynnex, had already so far contrived to affront the thrifty lady by hints of dilapidation money, and other acts of rapine on the premises, that instead of setting about considering with whom, among the country gentlemen of the neighbourhood, she was at liberty to make the best bargain for Maplehurst, she considered only which among them was likeliest to prove a rumbustious neighbour to the Parson, and pitched upon Barnsley, as having injuries of his own to avenge, which would secure retribution for her own.

Mr. Barnsley's ready answer to this proposition contained instructions to Messrs. Harpenden and Hill to offer to the disconsolate semi-widow the sum of five thousand pounds for the property. It was not necessary to pause, ponder, or survey; Barnsley knew the number of acres, rods, poles or perches, and the precise value of every square inch of ground in the parish. It was a mere matter of arithmetic. A sum in the rule of three set him down Maplehurst at the value of 5,342*l.* 9*s.* 6*d.*, and five thousand was consequently a handsome offer. Having added a postscript, to the purport that he should wait upon Messrs. Harpenden and Hill to treat

further on the matter, the following day at one, he signed, sealed, and delivered his letter, and found the ladies in the drawing-room. Scarcely had he seated himself between the tea-table and a roaring fire, when Margaret saw that all was right,—that her father was himself again. His eyes sparkled, a vivid flush had already dispersed the slow-coursing blood from his sallow cheeks. There was even a degree of elasticity in the movement with which he crossed his legs, wholly at variance with his apathy of the preceding evening.

Margaret knew better than to notice even the slightest of these changes, or to question her father concerning his motives for repairing after tea to the library, to examine, candle in hand, a magnificent map of the county, suspended therein. It was not that the map could show him so much as a bramble-bush or dock-root of which he knew not. The wood, the brook, the ponds, delineated on the map, were written also in the tablet of his brain. All he wanted to determine, by renewed observation, was the exact amount of its eligibility as a purchase for Mr. Sullivan; and on perceiving that its position relative to Hawkhurst quadrupled the advantages it bore as an addition to his own estate, he felt that he had not offered a guinea too much. Old Sullivan would be furious at having such a prize carried off from under his disdainful nose.

On the following day, therefore, Mr. Barnsley waited upon H. and H. for the ultimatum of their client; when, to his consternation, his offers were explicitly rejected. On the spot, and without further reference to the map, he increased them by the three hundred and fifty pounds which he regarded as the legitimate value of the property, and was as readily answered that Dr. Dodwell had refused six thousand pounds for Maplehurst, from Farmer Hawkins of Longlands, only the preceding year! He now thought it desirable to pause; and after requesting the solicitors to transmit his proposals to the lady, whose views might be less rapacious than those of her deceased master, quitted them to proceed to the banking-house of his friend Closeman, where, after two hours' delay and preparation, he signed a power of attorney enabling him to sell out as much stock as would produce the sum of seven thousand

pounds sterling, from that laudable and constitutional stock the five per cents, since most nefariously paid off by the illiberality of government.

'Why, what the deuce!—is my friend Miss Margery going to be mittimussed?' demanded Closeman, as he received his constituent's commission. 'Not election scores, I know; faith, they must be pretty well cleared off by this time. What can you want with seven thousand pounds, except to marry your daughter?'

'To marry myself, perhaps,' answered Barnsley, jocosely, not choosing to declare the truth.

'Ay, ay!—a dower for a wi-dower, eh? and may be for a dow-ager, eh?—they were up to snuff in saying you wanted to buckle to the Viscountess?—eh?—'

'With the Viscountess!—Did they say so?'—inquired Barnsley, in amazement.

'Why not exactly that. But at the election, one of the placards swore that you had made up to her and got goose. But I fancy you got nothing at Wynnex Abbey but gosling? eh? No want of gosling there, I'll take my davy;—never beheld such a jackanapes as that lad, since I handled the coin of the realm!'

'There is no *harm* in Lord Shoreham,' replied Barnsley, entering into the question with reluctance—'The young man has been injudiciously brought up, and is misled by bad advisers.'

'Those uncles?—ay, ay!—Enough to corrupt a conventicle!—I wouldn't trust that sly and dry 'un with my purse and half-a-crown in't!—And as to the knowing blade they call the Parson (to whom the Viscount has given old Dodwell's living) it would not surprise me to hear he had set the marble figures on his ancestors' monuments, a-dancing like madmen over their graves!'

'More likely that he would provide a troop of opera-dancers to take their places!' said Barnsley.—'Ah! my dear Closeman, these are strange times for the bringing up of ingenuous youth;—it strikes me that a lad leaving a public school now-a-days, is a match for the devil;—far more likely to take in than be taken. I heard young Shoreham boasting to his uncle Gus, of having done Baron Nebuchadnezzar Salfiore at the Red House, about some pigeon-match or other which——'

'Baron Nebuchadnezzer Salfiore!—Who the deuce is that?—One of the Rigdom Funidos family?'

'Salfiore is the first Baron of Jewry, just as the Montmorencys are premier barons of Christendom. The great Jews of the Stock Exchange are all titled, you know, by some king or emperor, and infidels as they are, appear at court with half-a-dozen crosses on their breasts.'

'Actually make the sign of the cross, eh?—The Archbishop of Canterbury should have an eye to 'em,—that's an eye which would be worth a Jew's eye!' said Closeman, laughing. 'But, my fine fellow, this crusade of yours against wise men of the East don't lead me out of sight of the seven thousand pounds, eh?'

'Let them be ready by to-morrow night,'—replied Barnsley, more gravely, 'and you shall know the why and the wherefore hereafter.

On the following night, however, instead of having to write out a cheque in favour of Messrs. Harpenden and Hill, on account of his purchase, Barnsley had to advance upon his offers so far as six thousand pounds; and again to be rejected. 'Mrs. Rumbell was firm—she knew the value of property;—she could not afford to give it away.'

Barnsley was now growing uneasy. He did not choose to be robbed; but could not make up his mind to throw what poor old Dodwell would have called, 'such a titbit' into the hands of Sullivan. Messrs. Harpenden and Hill kept a watchful eye upon his eagerness. They did not *advise* him to increase his offers; but kept hinting that he would never forgive himself the loss of such an opportunity, if he suffered it to slip through his fingers.

To Margaret's great delight, accordingly, her father became completely convalescent. He had now an object for every day's existence; a bit of business to write notes about; to write to Westerton about; and (to borrow an expression from Billy Pitt) *to send messages about in italics*. Every morning he rode, field by field, over Maplehurst farm; every evening he had to communicate the result of his observations to Messrs. Harpenden and Hill. Already he had given the people at Maplehurst reason to understand that he was about to become lord of the manor,—that they were to be his helots, Already he secretly rejoiced in this new prospect of power; both as an

accession of personal importance, and as a means of inflicting provocation upon Sullivan.

It was provoking to himself, however, to be obliged to enlarge, day after day, the scale of his negotiations. Mrs. Rumbell, or her sly legal investigators, fixed the price of Maplehurst at seven thousand pounds; and Barnsley was beginning to fear they would not abate a guinea of their pretensions. Messrs. Harpenden and Hill received his peddling advances with an air of civil superiority, such as one man assumes towards another the moment he becomes acquainted with his foible. They saw that Barnsley's vindictive enmity against Sullivan would lead him by the nose to any excess of absurdity; and profited by his weakness.—The careless indifference with which they received his increased biddings, impressed upon his mind not only the inadequacy of his intentions, but the contempt entertained by the arbitrators of the business for his narrow parsimony. And thus Barnsley, at other times as proud of his prudence as some men of their prodigality,—who placed his pride in driving a hard bargain, rather than in bargaining like a gentleman,—now, subjugated for the first time by his passions, bid on like a spendthrift, with his two Judases of attorneys laughing him gravely in the face!

At length on the eighth day of negotiation, he sallied forth with his eyes sparkling, his coat well-buttoned, his riding-stick knowingly jerked, and his very mare pricking up her ears and distending her nostrils, as if even *she* had smelt out, as she turned her head towards Maplehurst, that Othello's occupation was come again, and that there was business in the wind. Her master meanwhile turned *his* towards the office at Westerton, where he trusted Messrs. Harpenden and Hill were clenching his final offer of £6850.

The affair seemed fast upon its close; and as Barnsley attained the confines of the little estate, (even that grip of land which united it with Hawkhurst, and which at that present riding presented to his view a magnificent field of Swedes), he felt as if every hedge-stake on which he gazed were his own; and half rose in his stirrups to have a better view of the green ocean of his turnip-tops glittering with morning dew.

It was but a step further to the gate leading across the farm. But in attempting to open the latch with his hooked stick, an accomplishment which long practice places at the

fingers' ends of every country gentleman, the gate was refractory. It was in vain he poked and pulled; there was nothing for it but to dismount and ascertain by what means of twig or pebble, some mischievous urchin had contrived to hamper the latch. And the means were only too apparent; a staple hasp and padlock presented themselves to his view on the other side!

'I suppose the Stokeswell people were beginning to take right of pathway across the fields to get to Hawkhurst,' was Barnsley's private commentary on the circumstance. 'In that case, Folkes is right to lock his gate. I can easily go on through the lane to the farm-yard.'

'So you've put a lock on Norcroft gate, I see?'—said he, addressing Farmer Folkes, who touched his straw hat with a knowing look, as Barnsley rode into the yard.

'No sir, twarnt I;—'twas by my lord's horders,' said the Kentish farmer, enjoying a joke at Barnsley's expense, at whose expense so little else was to be enjoyed.

'*My Lord?*'

'I means my Lord Shur'am, Mr. Barnsley.'

'Why what the deuce has Lord Shoreham to do with *you*, Folkes?'

'You see, sir, Master Simons, the Wynnex bailiff, wur over here afore breakfast, a giving his orders: and *he* said nobody was on no account to be riding over the premises.'

'But what right has Mr. Simons to give any orders about the matter?'

'Why, warn't you awar', sir, as my lord had bought the property?'

'Lord Shoreham buy Maplehurst?—You must be under some mistake?'

'No, no, sir,—I've too much at stake in the matter for a *mistake*.—Aw, aw, aw!—I wur ower at West'ton yesterday a'ternoon, with Muster Dobbs and his people.'—

'But what have Mr. Dobbs and his people to say to the question?—Harpenden and Hill are acting for the late Dr. Dodwell's estate?'

'True, sir; and Muster Dobbs signed with 'em for the purchase o' *this* estate in my lord's name, last night.—But what I went now for, war to meet Parson Drewe and Muster Simons to settle with 'em about exchanging this 'ere farm as

't stands, for my lord's farm up at Chestham, what is just now wacant. And so as they threw summut handsome into the bargain, why I made no bones of obliging my lord; and I'm to be out o' this afore Christmas.'—

'And who are they going to put in here?' demanded Barnsley, his heart sickening within him.

'Why, from what I do hear, sir, I carkilate the new'uns be Lon'on folk.—Muster Simons, *he* said summut about the new tenant being a gemman, a friend o' the new rector's;—a gemman what used to be in business—'

'In *business?*'

'Kept a slap-up public, sir, summas nigh Turnham green, and 'orsed the 'ammersmith coaches.'—

'Good heavens!'

'You see, sir, when the kennel's moved ere, it 'll want some knowing chap to deal with the 'untsman and whippers in, and they sort.—A 'twouldn't a done for a plain man like the likes o' me.'

'The kennel?—whippers in?'—faltered poor Barnsley, involuntarily reverting to his fences and his experimental farm.

'Why 'arnt you 'eard, sir, as my lord 'ave taken the 'ounds?—They be to be called the Winnox 'arriers; and my lord and Parson Drewe be to 'unt 'em.'

'Good morning, Mr. Folkes,' said Barnsley, unable longer to support the colloquy; and, turning the head of his mare, he pattered off along the lane towards Westerton.

CHAPTER XXII.

Second thoughts are supposed to be better than first; and even third are not unfrequently an improvement. Barnsley set off from the barn-yard at Maplehurst, fully resolved to proceed to the office of Harpenden and Hill, and unseal the vials of his wrath upon their heads. Within a mile of Westerton, he determined rather to modify his indignation, and throw himself on his ward's mercy, not to cry havoc and let slip a pack of fox-hounds within a stone's throw of his park-palings; but, while crossing the bridge, he suffered prudence to whisper into one ear and pride into the other; and

leaving the hounds to chance, and the attorneys to their conscience, he went his way quietly to the banking-shop of his friend Closeman of Cinnamon Lodge.

'So the lawyers have been too far north for you, eh?'—said Closeman, after listening to his tale of woe. 'Serves you right for expecting them to forgive you.'

'Forgive me?—*What?*'

'All the jobs you've been taking out of their hands for the last twenty years. Don't you know the story of the French farce-writer (Molly Eyre—or some such name), who wrote all his life against doctoring (that was his *doc*-trine, eh?)—and when he fell sick, and into the doctor's hand at last—'

'Well?'

'Why they killed him dead on the very *boards* of his theatre; (a *deal* too bad, eh?) But how came you to let two such fellows as Harpenden and Hill send you to the dogs,—or the dogs to you, eh,—Barnsley?'

'No matter! The mischief is done. The deuce of the business is the seven thousand pounds. Stocks have risen two and a half since Monday; and, if this news from Algiers should be true, we shall have them up higher to-morrow. Deuced unlucky moment!'

'But what occasion is there for buying in just now? As long as you like your money to lie with us, we can afford to give you twice the interest you will get elsewhere. My hops clear me fourteen per cent. this season, (went off at a hop, skip, and jump.) There was a chap out of your parish here yesterday, (Dick Abdy, one of the Kentish yeomen who sets his face against government securities,) who brought us a pretty round sum to invest as we thought proper. This house has been doing its best for Abdy these fifteen years, and he finds himself none the worse for us.'

'I fancy 'tis the best thing I can do,' said Barnsley, whose usually clear head was perplexed with visions of scarlet coats and velvet caps. 'This election has cut me down wofully; I can't afford to make another gap in my income.'

'*Gap?*—eh!—thinking of your hedges, eh! The word comes pretty pat to you already. Couldn't you indict those Drewe rascals for nuisances, to be prosecuted as the act directs?'

'I wish it were a laughing matter,' said Barnsley, irritably; too sore in his feelings to bear the punches in the side habitually distributed by Closeman to his friends. 'Just now that I am required to make something of a figure in the county, and go to considerable expense for a town-residence, I find my income reduced by——'

'But I tell you it need not be reduced!' cried Closeman. 'Leave your seven thousand pounds in our hands,—snug,—under the rose,—and—come let me see!—we'll treat you like one of ourselves; we'll undertake six per cent.; giving you liberty to recall it at any moment that suits you.'

'Well, well!—let us have it in black and white!' said Barnsley, thwarted on all sides, and scarcely caring for a life thus harassed. 'Call in your clerk, and give me a stamped acknowledgment for the money; with a separate agreement for the interest. I am going to town to-morrow to consult with Fagg about the sufficiency of the release signed by Lord Shoreham. Those people are betraying so bad a spirit, that it is time I should look to my interests.'

And, while the necessary papers were making out by a spruce young gentleman, blessed with particularly large ears for the support of his pen and the absorption of every breath of news that entered the counting-house, Barnsley stood talking over his affairs, public and domestic, with the banker; giving vent to all his grievances against Sullivan, and vows of vengeance against Parson Drewe. A copy of the acknowledgment was hastily signed on both sides, and deposited in the deed chest of the house; for, on hearing the voice of Timmins in the shop, Closeman hinted his advice to Barnsley to turn his heel upon the brazier, who had turned the tables upon him.

'At least,' thought Barnsley, as he reached his lodge-gates again, and entered the domain so long a realm of peace and happiness, 'at least, I have got out of my dilemma about that floating money. Closeman, though deuced disagreeable, is a steady fellow; I have my eye always on the house; and, should any desirable investment present itself, nothing will be easier than to draw out the whole or part of the sum. I could not have afforded just now to lose the interest of my money.'

Next day, he was in London, reaping new nettles in

Lincoln's Inn; and, on the day following his return home, he proceeded with Margaret, according to a long-standing engagement, to spend a day or two at Withamstead Hall. He had no great appetite for his visit. There was just that degree of neighbourship between him and the old gentleman which, among people incapable of strong affections, passes for friendship. He would have been exceedingly sorry that electioneering should put asunder those whom the petty sessions had joined; but he knew that he was worth his weight in law-books to Lord Withamstead. His practical edition of Burn's Justice was invaluable to his less erudite brother magistrate; and he had been the saving of five ton of hay per annum to the Hon. and Rev. Cyril, by stirring him up to the valorous self-sacrifice of taking tithe in kind, and plunging himself into hot water with his parishioners.

'We shall see!'—soliloquized Barnsley;—(for though his daughter was in the chariot by his side as he drove up to the Hall door, he never dreamed of addressing his remarks to *her*)—'we shall see whether in this instance honours change manners.' And, by dint of close investigation, he thought he could discern in the footmen who opened it, a peculiar jerk of the tags upon their shoulders, acquired since these badges of servitude had lashed their tails over buttons bearing a baronial coronet; and in the half-embarrassed look of the old lady, a sort of shy consciousness, as if guessing what they must be thinking of. When she rose from her work-box to bid them welcome, instead of taking off her spectacles as was her wont on laying by her work and entering into conversation, she kept them on as a screen to her *mauvaise honte*. It was a sad thing to see a respectable old woman look so foolish; while, as to the two elderly Honourable young ladies, their tongues were so loosed by the desire of being affable, that a sluice-gate seemed suddenly spread to inundate the Low-Countries.

'Did you meet my brother?' inquired Felicia of Barnsley. 'If you would step down towards the pheasantry, I should not be at all surprised if you were to meet my brother. It is by no means uncommon for Mr. Holloway to return that way from shooting.' Stupid George had risen prodigiously in their estimation since he was inscribed in the peerage as heir apparent to the barony of Withamstead.

His sisters evidently thought him a wonder, whom the world would go forth into the wilderness to look upon.

Barnsley, however, being of a different opinion, crossed his legs in a comfortable arm-chair, well inclined to remain where he was. There was nothing in the sight of the Honourable George Holloway's doeskin gaiters more enticing than in those of plain George; and he had begun twaddling with the old lady about white mustard seed,—cork-soles—and a recent overturn of the Westerton tallyho, in the genuine humdrum tone befitting a country visit, when a question and answer passing between the Honourable Miss Felicia and her Honourable sister, revealed the fact that Sir Henry Woodgate was out shooting with their brother.

'Sir Henry Woodgate?'—cried Barnsley, in a tone of amazement.

'Papa thought, (having heard of some sort of understanding between you,) that you would not mind meeting Sir Henry,' observed Miss Holloway, amazed to find that any one could think so much of the importance of a man who, after all, was only a baronet.

'Not the slightest,—not the slightest!' exclaimed Barnsley, secretly delighted that an opportunity should so soon present itself of improving his acquaintance with one whom it was his object to conciliate. 'Has Mr. Holloway had tolerable sport lately? There are a good many partridges left towards Stokeshill; but they are amazingly wild, out of all chance for anything but a backwoodsman. By the way, I think I will step down and see what Holloway has been about. I want to talk to him about some woodcocks which Job Hanson put up in one of my copses. Whereabouts did you say I should find him?' And, after receiving due information, away went the man of business, hoping to 'put up' Sir Henry, who, as Closeman would have said, had so much difficulty in putting up with *him*.

'You are quite recovered, I find, my dear, from your measles?' said the old lady, civilly intent on engaging Margaret in conversation; while sitting dozily in her arm-chair, before the fire, waiting for candles.

'The scarlet fever.'

'I meant the scarlet fever!—Poor Lady Shoreham must

have been sadly alarmed. However, they spent a very pleasant fortnight at Sandgate.'

'Ramsgate, I believe.'

'I meant Ramsgate. We crossed them in London as we were coming from Shropshire, and they on their way into Suffolk.'

'Buckhurst Lodge, Ma'am, is in Norfolk,' corrected one of the better-informed honourable young ladies.

'I meant Norfolk;—a very fine place it is, and a noble county;—the garden of England,—quite the garden of England.'

'You are thinking of Kent, Ma'am,' interrupted the other daughter. 'You know we are all so accustomed to call our own county the garden of England.'

'Yes, I meant Kent; if I recollect I never was in Norfolk; except once when we went (Mr. W. and myself—I mean Lord Withamstead and myself), to see Ickworth; and a charming town it was.'

'I fancied Ickworth was in Suffolk?'—observed Margaret, with some hesitation.

'I meant Suffolk, my dear; of course Suffolk or Norfolk, you know, is much the same thing; but no one would think of confounding Norfolk and Kent; not but what I dare say the air of Norfolk may do poor Mrs. Sullivan a vast deal of good.' Margaret could not exactly follow the mental logic of the old lady. 'Natal air is said to be a fine cure for hectic complaints. I always thought it would be an excellent plan for Mrs. Sullivan to visit Norfolk.'

'Mrs. Sullivan, Ma'am, you know was born at Brereton Castle, in Ireland,' observed her younger daughter.

'My dear, I meant Ireland,' mumbled the old lady, shaking herself up, as she would have done one of Squill's draughts; and trying not to appear more dozy than she could help. 'They say her son is to marry Lord Shoreham's youngest sister.'

'The elder of the Miss Drewes,—Miss Lucilla,' said her daughter. 'The one who plays so finely on the harp.'

'Yes, I meant the one who plays so finely on the harp;—that is I believe I meant—I'm sure I——'

'But you know, my dear Madam, Sir Henry was mentioning, at breakfast, that the Norfolk people pretend

Mr. Brereton is engaged to his cousin Lady Lavinia Buckhurst.'

'Is he—did they—did Sir Henry?—I'm afraid I've been a little sleepy, my dear,' said she, addressing Margaret. 'I'm apt to have a short nap this frosty weather before candles are brought in.'

It was needless to inform Lady Withamstead that the frost which made her so sleepy, was fine open November weather, calculated to render Parson Drewe the happiest of mankind; she would of course have answered, 'for frosty, read mild.'

The poor old lady was wide awake, however, when seated an hour or two afterwards at her dinner table; yet she did not appear much more herself than during her nap. Her mind was perplexed by the sight of the family plate, (which instead of being old-fashioned, or fashioned of the middle ages, was middle-aged-fashioned), reburnished, and engraved with all the new-born pomps and vanities conferred by the herald's office. Not a salt spoon had escaped. And when the butler (conceiving it a pity that his old master should have been at the trouble of being made a lord for nothing) kept asking for more fish for 'my lord,' 'my lady' looked quite shamefaced.

With respect to stupid George, however, that which had made her shy, had made him bold. He now gave vent to the platitudes he had not found courage, as a commoner, to inflict upon his fellow-creatures; and whereas dulness emphasized becomes twice as importunate as the gentle dulness that flows on, an eternal Lethe, 'without *o'er*flowing, full,'—he was more tiresome than ever. Even Barnsley, who had a long standing regard for George, and was in a mood of great animosity, could not help feeling that the ill-toned instrument was not half so offensive while restrained to village psalmody, as when now attempting the melodies of Rossini and Mozart;—that so long as George Holloway had talked squire, of game laws, drill husbandry, boring for water, or boring for anything else, his mediocrity was respectable; but that the moment he attempted the balance of power, or the international policy of Russia and France, he became drowsier than the drowsiest bagpipe. Lord Withamstead was the only person present disposed to argue

with him; but the poor old man having taken it into his head, or had it put there, that his plain common-sensical way of speaking in the commons must be exalted into something higher in the lords, fancied that in private as in public life, he must amend his style; and the same consciousness of importance which made the son so voluble, rendered the father mum.

Sir Henry Woodgate sat by, not contemptuous, but contemplative. He had arrived that day at Withamstead, and was to pass two more there on his road to Dover previously to his embarkation for the Continent; in order to fulfil a promise made to the new lord at the period of the election. He was desirous to show the old gentleman that he respected his motives of neutrality on that occasion, and was grateful for the cordiality with which the Holloways welcomed him back to his native country. His father had been godson to old Holloway; and his own name of Henry was derived from his father's of Richard Henry; the latter being added by Mr. and Mrs. Holloway in memory of a teething infant they had lost at the moment of little Woodgate's baptism.

'To think that if my little Henry had lived he might have been your father!' was the old lady's adjuration, on first beholding the tall young baronet; for she was never celebrated for the perspicuity of her ideas: and all the poetry of her matter-of-fact nature was attached to the memory of the babe whose loss constituted the only affliction of her harmless and uneventful life. Her elevation to rank was the grand event of her old age; the untimely death of poor little Henry the grand event of their youth; and Sir Henry appeared to be a sort of ideal descendant of the infant. She had insisted, when George was making out his statistical numbering of the tribe of Holloway for commemoration in the peerage, that 'Henry, born Aug. 1. 1787 died an infant,' should be duly immortalized.

'Miss Agnes must be getting into years?' said Lady Withamstead, by way of entering into conversation with her young neighbour, not perceiving that Miss Felicia, the contemporary of Sir Richard Woodgate's only daughter, was biting her lips and bridling with indignation. 'I remember your grandmother and I lay in together; I think it was with

Cyril—let me see—no! it was with my youngest daughter. Miss Woodgate must be near upon forty!'

'My aunt is one of those persons who have no age,' observed Sir Henry. 'The gentleness and benevolence of her disposition and the secluded life she has led, have left her all that bloom of mind which is the most valuable portion of youth.'

'We all fancied in Kent that she would be very much cut up by the death of Mr. Smith,' observed Miss Holloway, jealous of this rival claim to an autumnal spring.

'Mr. Smith?' observed Sir Henry, puzzled to conjecture what affinity could exist between the names of Smith and Woodgate.

'My poor dear godson's tutor,' added Lady Withamstead.

'I was so young at the period of my father's death,' said Sir Henry, 'and my mother and grandmother had so many motives to avoid all recurrence to family histories, that Kent was an interdicted subject.'

'But Mr. Smith held the living of Stokeshill at the time you quitted the place,' said Miss Holloway.

'The living?—Smith?—True!—I perfectly recollect him now. A grave gentlemanly young man, against whom there existed some prejudice in the family; for he never came to the house.

'Never in your remembrance, perhaps. Miss Woodgate and he had formed an imprudent attachment, and when the living was given him as a reward for his services, he proposed for her to Sir Richard, who forbade him the house. It was always said that the old Lady Woodgate wished her granddaughter to be happy in her own humble way; but your mother and Sir Richard were against the match. It was a sad thing for poor Mr. Smith when your family went abroad.'

'At least it served to put an end to the engagement,' said Sir Henry, with something of the family prejudice.

'Yes, and an end to *him*,' said Lady Withamstead. 'The poor young man was in weak health; and, six months after Mr. Barnsley took the Place, he was in the churchyard. Mr. Barnsley!—I think it was six months after you came to Stokeshill that the living fell in?

'There or thereabouts, ma'am,' replied Barnsley, withdrawing his attention for a moment from a discussion between George and his father, concerning bush drainage in high-lying meadows. 'It was a very melancholy circumstance so soon after our instalment, the death of that young man!—a most amiable person, and, I fancy, of considerable attainments. He had no relations at hand, and I recollect officiating as chief mourner at his funeral.'

And Margaret, whose quick intelligence had seized the whole chain of this melancholy history, could not help recollecting that ere the grass could have sprung upon the earth upturned by the grave of the young rector, her father must have passed by it as chief mourner at another funeral,—even that of her young mother! How often had she herself loitered in Stokeshill church-yard, near the grave-stone of 'The Reverend Julian Smith, rector of this parish;' little suspecting that a broken heart lay beneath; or that his untimely death had left behind on earth, a more than widow! Involuntarily her countenance became overclouded by this reference to her mother and the lover of Agnes Woodgate; involuntarily she sighed over the unimpressible nature of a world to which beauty, youth, and tenderness, bequeath no trace save a tombstone above, and a little dust below; when Miss Felicia, noticing the pensive air of the young lady of the party who was of course to be addressed only upon topics suitable to young ladies, suddenly addressed her across the table with, 'I suppose, Miss Barnsley, you are quite on the *qui vive* with the prospect of having the Wynnex hounds so near you? I dare say you expect hunt-balls and breakfasts when the hounds throw off? I knew we should have fine doings in the neighbourhood when Lord Shoreham came of age!'

Margaret Barnsley coloured to the temples at this ill-timed sally; and Sir Henry, startled by the apostrophe and looking towards her, attributed this sudden flush to delight at the improvement of her prospect. The reverie produced by a disclosure of sentiments and sorrows on the part of his gentle aunt, of which hitherto he had entertained no suspicion, was disagreeably interrupted. He did not want to be recalled from Agnes Woodgate to a Mr. or Miss Barnsley.

'A poor, weak, trivial girl!' was his mental commentary

on the young lady's blush; for Sir Henry was at the age when young men, if not blinded by beauty, are always on the look out for mental superiority. Fascinated by the lofty sentiments of Helen Sullivan, the decision of her manners, the superiority of her address, he made no allowance for the confidence inspired by her position in society, the encouragement of a mother's presence, the love and support of her brothers; and, while admiring in Helen the pride of the parterre, tended, trimmed, and cultivated into beauty, did not sufficiently appreciate in Margaret the wild flower whose unpropped blossoms derive their luxuriance only from the summer showers, and the unsullied sunshine of Heaven.

Of Sir Henry meanwhile, Margaret Barnsley's impressions were far more favourable. He had long occupied an undue share of her thoughts as the idol of those by whom she lived surrounded; yet every word she heard him utter, every feeling she could trace as influential over his conduct, seemed to excuse the infatuation of the Stokesfielders in his favour. She liked the perfect independence, the almost surly recklessness of his manners. Still disgusted by her first insight into the basenesses and servility of the world, she admired his undisguised indifference to the suffrage of society. She was dazzled by his scorn, captivated by his indifference. She was delighted by the look of approval cast by Woodgate on her father, when, in answer to the injudicious interrogatories of the all-discussing George Holloway, Barnsley expressed his opinion of Lord Shoreham.

'I should be sorry to decide upon the young man's character from his conduct towards myself,' said he, in a tone of indulgence that greatly enhanced his own dignity. 'Lord Shoreham has fallen into the hands of advisers, from whose influence his father's insight into their character seemed to have secured his youth and inexperience; but time will probably exhibit both myself and them to him in a truer light. Meanwhile I will not pronounce too harsh a judgment upon the son of an old friend, because his boyhood is swayed by evil counsel. Though neither I nor mine shall ever set foot again in Wynnex Abbey, it will gratify me to learn that Lord Shoreham obtains an honourable place in the opinion of the country.'

Such sentiments, Margaret perceived, were doing more to

remove Sir Henry's prejudices against her father than all the courtesies Barnsley could offer; and she retired that night to rest with strong hopes that a good understanding might be eventually established between the families. She thought that if Woodgate and her father should happen to ride together on the morrow, Sir Henry could not fail to be pleased with her father's zeal for the benefit of his parish and the county. Aware how high a value was set by others upon Mr. Barnsley's activity as a public man, and his sagacity as a founder of penitentiaries and originator of savings' banks, she fancied that even the romantic Woodgate must appreciate the practical philosophy of his successor at Stokeshill.

Instead of missishly deliberating, as she laid her head upon her pillow, upon the colour of the ribbons likely to attract at the breakfast-table the approval of Woodgate, she considered only in what light her father would appear, should the conversation happen to fall on such or such a topic. She recollected that in certain dissertations upon prison discipline, the abolition of slavery, the suppression of capital punishments, between Barnsley and the amiable but feeble-minded Edward Sullivan, her father always came off victorious, and felt that if feelings of mutual regard should ever bring Sir Henry Woodgate a guest to Stokeshill,—then——

But of what use to ponder on such a contingency? On proceeding, rather late, to the breakfast-table the following morning, for young ladies who muse upon their pillows overnight are apt to be behindhand in the morning, she found the party assembled over their muffins and newspapers, listening to the holding forth of the Hon. George. The circle was complete, with the exception of her own vacant chair; yet no Sir Henry was visible; nor did any one seem to notice his absence. They made answer to each other's insignificant remarks, without missing the master spirit that would have supplied them with strong arguments and generous sentiments; and Lady Withamstead sat, spectacles on nose, seeking for fashionable news in the 'Times,' and politics in the 'Morning Post,' without once sufficiently forgetting herself to pour tea into the supernumerary cup before her. Though Sir Henry was absent, for once, she was not.

Margaret longed to inquire whether their dinner was

likely to prove more interesting than the breakfast; when Miss Felicia, suddenly interrupting George's discussion of the comparative porcelaineous qualities of the teacups of Worcester, Derby, Swansea, and Colebrookdale, startled her with the intelligence that Sir Henry was off to Dover by daylight; summoned away by letters which had followed him from London, containing news of the indisposition of Countess van Pierssen.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It was perhaps fortunate for Barnsley that Parliament assembled for the session three weeks earlier than had been anticipated; for firm as he was in his intention of not being provoked into open war by his enemies at Wynnex, it required almost more than human patience to bear the incursions of the Wynnex harriers, and the brutes, biped and quadruped, by which they were followed to the field. Scarcely a day passed but his keepers, with ill-repressed glee, or his bailiff, with ill-disguised satisfaction, did a tale unfold of the devastations committed upon his premises under the sanction of Parson Drewe; for though Gus had progressed back to his office, after Christmas, to take his snuff and pare his nails at the expense of the nation, Alfred remained behind, to baptize the new-born, bury the dead, and suppress the foxes of the parish of Wynnex; extracting a new book of lamentations from the man of Stokeshill.

It was vexatious to poor Margaret to perceive the daily increasing irritability of her father under these minor miseries; which, though they served to line the barrel of Regulus only with tintacks and tenpenny nails, formed a tormenting source of petty martyrdom. His natural love of order,—his pride in the neatness of his farm,—his desire to promote purity of morals in the district,—all his pet predilections were thwarted by the sportsmanlike appropriation of Maplehurst; his hobbies were treated with as little respect as any other bundle of sticks on his estate. The Parson, instead of going round to an open gate to avoid one of his fences, would attack one of his fences to avoid an open gate; and as Barnsley had not found courage to withdraw from

the sporting association formed by the gentlemen of East Kent, Parson Drewe contrived so to hunt his nephew's pack that a good run appeared less an object than that the scent should lead across the very lawns of Stokeshill Place.

No sooner, however, was Mr. Barnsley fairly settled at Osborn's Hotel in the Adelphi, and the Withamsteads in Bruton Street (for Great George Street was already renounced as unlordly), than Margaret was beset by new uneasiness. She began to doubt whether the wisdom, available in legislating for hundreds, would prove equally so in legislating for millions. She had heard, for such was the favourite cant of Tory times, that a senator must be born a senator; that it required a peculiar order of man to act in parliament. Though convinced that her father had too much good sense to put himself forward as a speaker, she feared he might not realise the expectations of the constituents purchased with his six thousand seven hundred pounds. As he had not received, it seemed unlikely he should return, his money's worth.

To tranquillise these misgivings, she had no means of obtaining information. The papers delight to tell of the Broughams and Peels, Macaulays and Stanleys; but are remiss in informing the nation in what manner a Mr. John Barnsley plays his part as a committee-man; or delivers his few words inaudible in the gallery. Six months hence, she might possibly catch up a whisper that 'poor Barnsley made a wretched member;' that 'the Westerton electors were exceedingly dissatisfied with poor Barnsley;' that Brazier Timmins had observed at a meeting, at the Winchelsea Arms, that Barnsley, after Holloway, was like chalk after cheese.

All this might not have fluttered the spirit of any girl less susceptible than Margaret. But she was all daughter. No other passion diverted the current of that purest of instinctive feelings. Her father was the object whose existence she was born to illustrate; 'for that cause came she into the world.' Her perception of this obligation had not been clearly developed till she found him disparaged at Wynnex Abbey; and had his election enabled her to whisper to herself, 'Now, thank God, he has attained a positive station in the county,' she would have been content. But

what if his failure in parliament should depress him below his former level?

It was not till after Easter that her father was to take a house in town for Miss Winston and herself. At present, they remained *tête-à-tête* at Stokeshill; but Margaret, thoroughly emancipated from the school-room, was now at liberty to read, work, and walk at hours of her own choosing. Ever since the poor governess had been brought to a true estimate of her pupil's value, by the hazard of losing her, she admitted that Margaret was too admirably disposed to require subjection; and Miss Winston was now more gratified at finding herself loved as a friend, than ever she had been at finding herself obeyed as a governess. But it was not to such a friend Margaret could confide her misgivings. Knowing her to be in communication with the Squillses, Dobbses, Holdfasts, and other worthies of Westerton, she would not breathe a word implying mistrust in her father. In this case, as it ought to be in all which involve the weaknesses of those we love, she would confide her cares to no living mortal.

While such were the dilemmas of the Barnsleys, it must not be supposed that the house of Drewe was exempt from tribulation. If Barnsley felt mortified and indignant at the results of his exertions at Wynnex, what was poor Lady Shoreham, at the frustration of her maternal projects?—She who had educated her son with a view to shining in society,—to lady-killing at Almack's, to being hunted by dowagers, adored by this flirt, or accepted as an adorer by that; she, who wished him to be the fashion,—to give bachelor balls, and family dinners,—to be courted by artists, fêted by foreigners, a sort of duodecimo Duke of Devonshire;—she to behold the knowing Viscount establish himself a Corinthian,—of somewhat more refined brass than the common herd, but still of brass! It matters little whether the cigar smoked in the public streets be of pure Havannah or coarse pigtail. Slang is still slang, whether emitted from between teeth which borrow their enamel from Delcroix's shop, or teeth which have recently escaped the hard impeachment of the Fives' Court. The man brought up disorderly to the watch-house may return to a bed of down in Curzon-street, or to a garret in the Seven Dials. But the nature of both repro-

bates is the same. One will end at the treadmill, the other in the King's Bench; but the same clay, the same *mud*, predominates in the frame of both.

Lady Shoreham, if she saw not all this philosophically, saw it practically. In her eagerness to form the manners of a man of the world, she had made him *plus Arabe qu'en Arabie*,—too knowing for even these times of universal knowledge. Fearful of discrediting petticoat government by producing a milksop; instead of a pigeon, there flew forth from her maternal nest a crow!

But odious as the young Viscount was likely to be pronounced by the coteries, and offensive as she considered his ingratitude towards his father's executors, towards herself his injuries were doubly ungrateful. Already she experienced the bitterness of having reared a thankless child. The worldly-wise uncles insinuated to Lord Shoreham that his mother's influence alone had caused such an undue transfer of authority to the attorney; that Barnsley and the widow were playing into each other's hands; that Lady Shoreham's object, after securing all she could for herself and daughters, was to fix herself, like a leaden weight, at Wynnex Abbey. They advised that her plans should be 'knocked on the head at once;'—and Lord Shoreham lost no time in apprising his mother that a large party of 'fellows' were coming to keep Christmas with him, who were likely to keep it after a fashion that rendered the place inaccessible to ladies. 'After the departure of that sick girl of Barnsley's,' he observed, 'he wished the Abbey to become Bachelor Hall.'

His breach with Barnsley having rendered it impossible for the executors to suggest the addition to his sisters' fortunes from the savings of his minority, Lord Tynemouth had undertaken to make the proposition to his nephew; but Lord Shoreham's motion that the question should be adjourned *sine die* was of so peremptory a nature, that it was evident his reply of—'We'll talk of all that some other time,' was such as would have been simplified by Gus or the Parson into—'It's no go!'

Lady Shoreham, infinitely mortified, accepted the friendly invitation of her kind-hearted brother that, instead of proceeding to Brighton as she proposed, they would all pass

the winter with him at Tynemouth Castle; and the girls were overjoyed. The splendid hospitality of a first-rate English country-house was a thing of which their continental gaieties had given them no idea; and after a week's exclamation against the bad taste of Shoreham in adopting the slang habits of his uncles, they set about being happier at Tynemouth than they had expected to be at Wynnex.

Not so their mother. Lady Shoreham was touched in the tenderest point, both as a woman, and a woman of the world. Her only son had thrown her off, and Lord Shoreham was pronounced to be the worst possible style of young man. She even learned from the solicitors that those of Lord Shoreham were raising considerable objections to the defrayal of her ladyship's extravagant improvements, and her ladyship's fantastical upholstery; but to this trait of shabbiness the incensed mother replied by addressing so high-toned and spirited a remonstrance to her son, that even Parson Drewe admitted 'the pewter must be stumped up,' and her ladyship's contracts fulfilled.

In addition to these offences on the part of her son, Lady Shoreham had to bewail the unaccountable defalcation of Mr. Brereton. In parting with the family at Ramsgate, he stated himself to be under an engagement to conduct his mother and sister to the Duke of Grantville's in Norfolk; after which, he proposed accepting the invitation of Lord Tynemouth. But from Buckhurst Lodge, as Christmas approached, came a lame sort of apology, and throughout their holiday festivities poor Lucilla wore the willow. The gossip of the newspapers soon announced that—'Among the English fashionables figuring at the court of Brussels were Sir Henry Woodgate and Mr. Sullivan Brereton of Brereton Castle;' and while Jessie and Flora saluted her with Gylbin Horner's exclamation of—'Lost,—lost,—lost!' Lucilla declared herself enchanted to have found him out; and began to long for London and new conquests.

The Countess Van Pierssen, meanwhile, on recovering from an attack, which her desire to attract Sir Henry to Brussels had caused her to fancy dangerous, saw nothing to lament in his loss of an election which would have fixed him permanently in a county she detested; and when, at Miss Woodgate's request, Sir Henry agreed to spend a month

with her at Brussels, and in company with his consequential friend Brereton, assumed a distinguished position in society, her vanity was completely gratified. Next to her diamond *aigrette*, her palace at the Hague, and chateau at the Scheldt, there was nothing she prized so highly as her son; and, thanks to the recommendation of her own high Spanish descent, she did not despair of uniting him to the web-footed heiress of Count Pierssen's cousin, Baron von Schwipschweischenbach, grandee of Spain, and Hereditary Grand Master of the ancient order of the Grampus.

CHAPTER XXIV.

From the moment of Mr. Barnsley's offering himself as a candidate for the representation of Westerton, Margaret had deeply regretted the direction his ambition was taking; nor was she reconciled to his pretensions even when she found herself settled, after Easter, in a comfortable house in Curzon Street, with a handsome carriage and establishment at her command, and the prospect of a season's fêtes to enliven the perspective.

Margaret was conscious of her own inadequacy to figure in that struggle of selfishness, vanity, and scorn. Ignorant of the value of heiress-ship to eight thousand a year in combination with youth and beauty, she dreaded the overpowering brilliancy, a crowd such as had surrounded her at the Wynnex *fête;* and shrinking from an encounter with dozens of Lord Shorehams, and hundreds of Sullivan Breretons, longed to adhere in London to the habits of seclusion she had acquired in the country.

But Barnsley had already placed his daughter's destinies out of his own jurisdiction. Lord and Lady Walmer, the grandees of Kent who had extended such gracious notice to him at Wynnex, were now his intimate acquaintance. The Countess,—one of those busy female politicians who smell out a new vote as readily as mosquitos a new comer into the tropics,—had fixed upon him to perform in the chorus of her political opera; and she was not only anxious to attach him to her own faction, but to detach him from that of the Marstons. Dazzled by the condescension with which, the

moment they were aware of his being in town, Lord Walmer left a visiting ticket and Lady Walmer an invitation-card at his hotel, and, charmed by the affability with which her ladyship inquired after the charming Miss Barnsley with whom she had been made acquainted by Lady Shoreham, Barnsley took courage to ask her advice as to the best mode of introducing Margaret. That her ladyship's counsels were of a more ambitious latitude than comported with his previous objects, was undeniable; but with Margaret's fortune and beauty, and Lady Walmer's flattering offer to present her at Court and assign her a seat in her opera-box, it seemed a superfluous act of humility to restrict his girl to the narrow sphere of society which might be properly considered her own.

The Countess, whose managing disposition could scarcely allow a chair or table she looked upon to remain in its place, was not sorry to have a young lady on whom to practice the art of chaperonage, previously to the début of her own beautiful little Lady Eva; and, as the only daughter of a rich member of parliament, entertained little doubt that Margaret would attain, under her patronage, such a connexion in life as would bind the vote of the member for Westerton eternally her own. Herself a woman of unblemished character, she was as proud of her virtue as vain of her abilities; and appreciating the full value of the countenance she was about to bestow on the obscure country girl, trusted to find in Margaret Barnsley unqualified submission to her dictation.

'Pray, my dear Miss Barnsley, have you any acquaintances in London?'—she demanded of Margaret, during the *entr'acte* of the opera, the first night of fulfilling her engagement towards her *protégée*.

'Only the daughters of Lady Withamstead, Lady Shoreham and Mrs. Sullivan, our Kentish neighbours,' replied Margaret.

'So much the better. As it was unlikely you should have formed any desirable intimacies, I am better pleased you should know no one but the Drewes.'

'The Drewes and——'

'Oh! the Holloways count for nothing; *they* are people with whom it is impossible to keep up an acquaintance in

town, and as to the Sullivans, the sons are abroad, and Helen devotes herself to her mother, so that you will never meet. With the exception, therefore, of Lady Shoreham, I hope you will encourage no familiarity on the part of the neighbours to whom you allude. I make it a point to drop Kent, the moment I come to town.'

Before the conclusion of Lady Walmer's elementary lecture, Margaret was thoroughly disenchanted with her prospects; and, shy as she was, would almost rather have encountered the crowd of London society with her father, or renounced at once its pomps and vanities, than place herself under the tutelage of a woman evidently accustomed to weigh human merit against the hard and dazzling diamond weights of fashion.

'I am not *myself* among these people!'—was her remark some time afterwards to Miss Winston, who had now subsided into the elderly home-staying friend, assisting her to receive visitors and settle with the housekeeper, and was perhaps the happier for having her position in the house irrevocably defined. 'Every one, it is true, is kind to me. Hearing us announced at balls as Lady Walmer and Miss Barnsley, they conclude me to be related to the Walmers; and, from the tone that prevails in addressing me, compared with that in which I *overheard* myself spoken of at Wynnex, I am convinced every one is in error with respect to my position in life. I know so little of the world, that I cannot at present determine what extent of degradation is conveyed in Lord Shoreham's expression of "the attorney's daughter;" but I cannot blind myself to the fact, that I have none of those noble relationships which seem to lend so much importance to other people. Of my mother's family, I scarcely know the name: of my father's relations, I remember only to have seen in my childhood a gruff, ill-mannered brother-in-law, named Heaphy, and a Mr. Winchmore,—but him, I think, I understood to be a man of business, and my mother's trustee. My uncle Clement is likely to pass his life in India; and it is clear that I have no support to expect from family connexions.'

'I am not aware that any other members of Mr. or Mrs. Barnsley's family survive,' said Miss Winston, embarrassed by a suspicion that these observations were interrogatively

addressed to her, and scrupulous to afford no information withheld by her patron. 'But your father's fortune and position in the world entitle you to appear in any society; and it would be an unworthy mistrust of yourself, my dear, if you felt inferior in ——'

'*Inferior!*'—interrupted Margaret, with something of the spirit of Helen Sullivan kindling in her expressive eyes. 'Dearest Miss Winston, do not so mistake me!—You would rebuke my pride rather than my humility, did you know how wickedly I am tempted to look down upon half the frivolous people with whom I have made acquaintance.'

'Lady Walmer is considered a very sensible woman——'

'Her kindness exempts *her* from all investigation or remark on my part. Besides, *she* seems to have an object in life, and to act up to it. Those with whom I find fault have made themselves odious to me by their affectation; they can neither sit, stand, nor speak in a natural way. Lady Henry Marston, for instance, a good person in her own family, and fond of her husband and children, becomes so conceited the moment she goes into the world, that I feel as if addressing a different person. I should fancy her in the last stage of a decline, had I not happened to see her at dinner and luncheon. As to the men,—but why should I talk of them? They are not worse than Mr. Brereton, Lord Shoreham, and his uncles.'

'You must put yourself into better humour with the world, my dear child,' said Miss Winston, with a melancholy smile; 'for, unless I am much mistaken, it is among those whom you meet at Lady Walmer's, your father expects you to settle for life.'

'Marry one of those artificial, cold-hearted men!'—cried Margaret, no longer fearing to pronounce the word in presence of her governess. 'Never! I would sooner be wife to Edward Sullivan. If I did not love, at least I should never despise him.'

'But you know, my dear, your father would not listen to the proposals of Mr. Edward.'

'Nor have I the least desire that he should have done so. But surely you do not think papa would urge me to marry any one against my inclinations?—With respect to going

into society, or choosing any particular chaperon, or a more showy style of dress, I never presume to consider my own inclinations in preference to his. But marriage is so serious a thing,—so intimate a thing,—a thing so absolutely involving one's happiness or misery,—that I could not sacrifice myself in that. No! I cannot, I will not, believe that my father would force to marry me against my inclinations!'

'Do not agitate yourself thus, my dearest Margery,' said her kind-hearted friend, terrified to perceive the blue veins swelling in her swan-like throat, and a vivid blush mantling on the cheek of her pupil. 'I have no reason to suppose Mr. Barnsley has any immediate views for you. But he mentioned to me last night with so much glee the sensation produced by your beauty, and some encomiums that have appeared in the newspapers—'

'Yes—they praised me as Lady Walmer's lovely and accomplished niece,—they would not have hazarded a remark had they supposed me to be only "the attorney's daughter."'

'Take care, Margaret, or I shall begin to think you envious of the distinctions of rank; or at least disposed to set undue value upon them.'

'No, dearest friend—I am convinced you do me more justice! But make some allowance for the soreness of my feelings in entering a world, where I find the one thing needful to be a qualification beyond the attainment of human will; a qualification which our Christian faith instructs us to disregard; a qualification to which, till within the last year, I never so much as heard an allusion; and my deficiency in which, contemptible as it may be in a moral sense, must influence my destinies to the latest moment of my existence! I feel this for myself, dear Miss Winston, but I feel it also for my father.'

'I am almost inclined to fear, my dear,' said the anxious governess, taking off her spectacles and laying aside Alison's Sermons, 'that you have already allowed your feelings to get the better of you.'

'No!'—answered Margaret with a smile, rising from her chair and seating herself closer to her friend.

'I really fear you have formed some attachment!'

'It would be easy still to answer—no!' said Margaret,

leaning towards Miss Winston, and throwing one arm over her shoulder. 'But I should hate myself for trying to deceive you, who are as much of a mother to me as anything not a mother can be—now more especially that your kindness invites my confidence. But there are some grievances which one only increases by talking of them. I always bear my finger-aches stoutly, till I have told you I am in pain; when, from the tenderness of your care and inquiries, I begin to fancy myself very ill.'

'But, on this occasion, I promise not to inquire,' said Miss Winston, patting her on the arm, touched by the childlike tenderness of her manner.

'You promise?—honour bright? Then I own I *have* seen the man whom of all others, I should like to marry; and that he is the man who, of all others, would least like to marry *me*. Not a word more! If you have penetrated my secret, indulge me by being silent towards myself as well as towards others. I know I have nothing to hope or expect; but, while the impression on my mind exists, it must prevent my gratifying the ambition of my father.'

Miss Winston, unwilling to reply with severity to this first confidence,—still less with encouragement such as she felt circumstances would never justify, fidgeted on her chair and shook her head.

'Tell me, at least, that I have your good wishes?' said Margaret, with some emotion, feeling at that moment the want of motherly caution or comfort.

'Heaven grant you patience and fortitude, my dear child!' said the governess, with a degree of unction greater even than her pupil desired. 'With so much to insure you a happy settlement in life, I hoped you had nothing at least to fear from the bitterness of disappointed affections; but God's will be done!'

From that day, however, Margaret made it so much a point to speak cheerfully of her position and prospects, that Miss Winston was relieved from her momentary alarm lest her young charge should be cherishing illusions fatal to her happiness. Miss Barnsley seemed to enjoy the opera, Almack's, public promenades and private entertainments, as much as if above the reach of sentimental griefs. Her father, greatly elated by her success, and his own—for his

maiden speech was crowned with laurels, verdant as the myrtle-wreath conceded to his daughter,—assigned no bounds to his pecuniary liberalities. Every enhancement to the toilet which coquetry could desire was at Margaret's disposal; and the Arabian, on which she accompanied him daily in the Park, such as even a Molyneux might envy. He was proud that his colleagues should see him accompanied by so lovely a daughter, with so graceful a seat, on so fine a horse. He was proud that the Morning Post should commemorate on the same day some luminous little speech of his on the reduction of the hop duty, and the brilliancy of the charming Miss Barnsley in a costumed quadrille at some charity ball patronized by Lady Walmer. His utmost hopes and expectations were fulfilled. He was becoming a man of business in the widest sense of the word. He was now a public man. His sphere of usefulness was enlarged from a county to a country. Instead of the Westerton House of Correction, or Maidstone Lunatic Asylum, he had now Newgate and Bethlem to claim his attention;—Millbank was his washpot, and over Brixton did he cast his shoe.

But, above all, he was distant thirty miles from Westerton, and thirty-two from Stokeshill! He was beyond reach of the petty swarm of gnats which of late had fastened on him, leaving him neither peace nor patience. From his house in Curzon Street, with its pleasant dinner-parties and visiting lists of ladies fair and lords unfair, he could defy the Hawkins and Timmins part of the community, slip from between the fingers of a Dobbs, and show himself loftily indifferent to the persecution of the sporting Parson. The hunting season was over. Even Lord Shoreham had exchanged his scarlet coat for the well-fitting garb that fitted him for the window at Crockford's; so that he had no further fear for his fences. All he ever heard of Stokeshill was in an occasional letter from his bailiff, to tell him 'Wheats was looking remarkable well; and that a week's rain would bring up the grass for a topping hay season.' Even the ghost of his departed enemy was laid. He had no fear of being molested in London by the apparition of Sir Ranulph de Woodgate.

On one point, indeed, Mr. Barnsley's triumph over his molestations and molesters was so complete, as painfully to

influence the best feelings of his nature. The evening papers accounted to him one night as he sat at Bellamy's for the absence of his honourable brother member by 'regretting to state, that Mr. Sullivan of Hawkhurst was confined to his bed by the effects of a fall from his horse, by which his collar-bone was fractured, which began to threaten serious results;' on the very day following, he was startled by perusing—'Died, universally lamented, at his house in Berkeley Square, Edward Sullivan, Esq., of Hawkhurst Hill, in the county of Kent, member of parliament during the last four sessions for the borough of Westerton. Mr. S., who was a claimant for the ancient barony of Chilton, (the estates of which have been five hundred years in the Sullivan family,) was married to a sister of the late Lord Brereton, of Brereton Castle, in the county of Cork, by whom he had several children; the eldest of whom succeeded the deceased Lord B. in his Irish estates, and is on the eve of marriage with his cousin, Lady Lavinia Buckhurst, youngest daughter of the Duke of Grantville.'

To do Barnsley justice, he was shocked by the suddenness of the event. He would have given much that his old neighbour had died in charity with him. Greatly as he had reason to resent the bitterness of Sullivan's enmity, he would have gladly sacrificed his own, that they might have shaken hands to part in peace. But it was now too late. Margaret recalled him to himself, when, on his return home, he communicated the melancholy tidings, by an exclamation of—'Now then, I suppose, Sir Henry Woodgate will come in for Westerton.'

And so it proved.—Lord Withamstead stopped his bran new family coach (of which the very blinkers of the harness groaned under the weight of armorial bearings), to inform Barnsley that the thing was done;—that nothing but the showy manifestations in Sir Henry's favour at the preceding election had prevented his own son George from coming forward. 'I hope,' observed the old gentleman good-humouredly at parting, 'that as unanimous and friendly a feeling may always prevail between you and that young man, as there did betwixt my late lamented friend Sullivan, and myself, during the five and twenty years we sat together.'

Barnsley smiled, and hoped so, too; but his conviction

said nay. Woodgate was twenty years his junior;—a man likely to be as speculative in his politics as the principles of rigid Toryism will admit; while Barnsley himself was as practical as a pulley. He could not but anticipate, moreover, occasional chafings against his own pride from the pride of his coadjutor. He would fain have done all the work of Westerton in the name and for the behalf of stupid George Holloway, rather than live in immediate contact with Sir Henry Woodgate.

Whether Margaret's views coincided or not with those of her father, she was judicious enough to keep them to herself. Lady Walmer complimented her on the brilliancy of her bloom, on the day the newspapers announced among the arrivals by the Salamander steam-packet from Ostend, the man whom her father would gladly have left vegetating in Lethe's wharf,—*i. e.* his father-in-law's château on the Scheldt; while Miss Winston, though faithful to her engagement of not allowing the fatal name to be pronounced between them, could not forbear pressing Margaret's hand, as they walked together out of the breakfast-room, after Barnsley's perusal of the announcement.

'Do you know anything of this young man, my dear?'—observed Lady Walmer on learning that the seat vacated by the death of Mr. Sullivan was already filled.

'Very little,' replied Margaret. 'I saw him for the first time when I had first the honour of meeting your Ladyship at Wynnex. There was a considerable degree of unfriendly feeling between him and my father at the Westerton election.'

'How came he, by the way, to contest it with your father?—Sir Henry, I fancy, is on the right side?'

'Their politics, I believe, are the same.'

'And their age too different to admit of any other competitions.'

'Sir Henry Woodgate must naturally feel mortified at seeing my father supersede him at Stokeshill Place.'

'Supersede him?'—

'It was of Sir Henry's grandfather, Sir Richard, that my father purchased the estate.'

'Purchased the estate,—your father purchase the estate?'—cried Lady Walmer. 'What a misapprehension have I been under all this time! I know nothing of the Westerton

side of the county; and when, on the night of the Wynnex ball, Lord Walmer in pointing out various people to me said something about the Stokeshill family being one of the most ancient in Kent, I concluded he was alluding to your father.'

'Perhaps,' said Margaret, with firmness, 'had you been aware that he was a new comer into the county, and belonging to a family wholly undistinguished by birth, I might have been unhonoured with the flattering kindness I have received?—In that case——'

'No, my dear,' interrupted Lady Walmer; 'your father asked my advice about disposing of you in London, and I was happy to be able to oblige him by an offer of my services as chaperon. But now I am personally acquainted with you, and derive so much daily satisfaction from your cheerful companionship and gentle manners, it is yourself to whom I am desirous to prove of use.'

And this was strictly true. Margaret, so unassuming in spite of her beauty and heirship, had made many friends in Lady Walmer's society, but not a single enemy: and though the Countess was vexed at being obliged to curtail the list of her *protégée's* qualifications of the antiquity of descent, she had hitherto proclaimed as her birthright, she felt pledged to secure a brilliant establishment for one who had been initiated into society under her auspices.

Meanwhile, it required some forbearance, on Margaret's part, to refrain from interrogating her father respecting the tone adopted towards him by his brother member. She fancied her father was out of spirits. He seemed absent,—perplexed; nor was it till he had gathered from his daughter the particulars of a ball at Lady de Hartenfield's, a sister of Lady Walmer, at which she had been present the preceding night, and danced three times with Lord Buckhurst, only son of the Duke of Grantville, that his brows unbent.

'Three times?—Why, Margery! you must have made a conquest of the young Marquis; eh! my dear! eh! Miss Winston?'—said he, rubbing his hands.

'Lord Buckhurst seemed to have heard of me, papa, from his cousin Helen.'

'And a great deal more, I suppose, from his cousin, Helen's brother Edward?'—

'Poor Edward was scarcely likely to dispose him in my favour. He has asked leave of Lady Walmer to be of our party to Ascot races.'

'I wish you joy, my dear, of your admirer. No young lady loses in the world by its being known that the heir of a dukedom is in her train; but there is something injurious in the report that a younger brother, such as Edward Sullivan, has presumed to propose. If poor Mr. Sullivan could but know that the nephew he was so proud of was following his son's steps to Stokeshill Place, he would hardly rest in his grave.'

'He need entertain no alarm,' observed Margaret. 'I have not the least vocation for becoming a duchess. I would promise without hesitation that—'

'Make no rash vows, my dear!' interrupted her father, with a smile. 'It is time enough to refuse Lord Buckhurst when he has made his proposals.'

CHAPTER XXV.

Margaret Barnsley could not repent the want of courage which had prevented her writing to Lady Walmer to return the subscription for Almack's for which she felt indebted to the application made by the Countess under a false impression of her claims, when, on the following Wednesday, she found herself the observed of all observers at the best ball of the season.

It is difficult for a very young girl to remain proof against the intoxications of vanity, when she finds young and old, men and women, passing and repassing for the satisfaction of a glimpse of her sweet face. There is pleasure in the very flutter of spirits created by general homage; and apathetic indeed must be the character of one who can remain insensible to such a triumph.

'My dear Miss Barnsley,' said Jessie Devereux, extending her hand to Margaret through the crowd, 'do you know you are becoming so terribly the fashion that there is no getting at you, even to deliver a message? I had a letter yesterday from Paris from Lucilla, (my aunt, and her daughters, you know, went abroad immediately on quitting

Tynemouth and are going to Baden for the summer,) who bid me ask you, if, when you return to Kent, you—my dear,' she whispered, having accomplished her object of getting close to Margaret,—*do* find out for us from Lord Buckhurst whether things are really fixed for his sister Lady Lavinia's marriage with that wretch Brereton. Aunt Shoreham wrote to papa to inquire for her; and he did not know to whom to address himself without compromising the dignity of the family.'

'I will ascertain the particulars for you, as far as I am able,' replied Margaret, gratified that her father's estrangement from Wynnex had done them no harm with the rational members of the family; 'but I have very little acquaintance with Lord Buckhurst.'

'Nonsense, my dear!—All London knows that he is dying in love for you. Ha! here is that horrid Sir Henry Woodgate!—That is the worst of Almack's! All other nights of the week, one's balls are safe from the parliamentary bores, not one of whom in sixty is good for anything but to frighten the crows, or give one the vapours.'

The waltz coming just then to a close, preparations were making round Lady Walmer's *protégée* and her friend, for the quadrille about to commence; when Lord Buckhurst came forward to claim the hand of Margaret with a degree of presumptuousness such as only the sons of Dukes, even when in love, seem privileged in assuming. But, when about to take their place, no *vis-à-vis* was at their disposal; and Lord Buckhurst set forth in search of some disengaged couple, whom he hoped to appropriate with the same authority he had exercised over Miss Barnsley.

'Paget, have you a *vis-à-vis?* Bagot, have you a *vis-à-vis?* Fitzroy, have you a *vis-à-vis?* Salfiore, have you a *vis-à-vis?*' cried he, in succession, to every one he met. To which interrogations some said 'yes,' some 'no,' and all passed by to the fulfilment of engagements of their own.

Musard's preparatory flourish of the bow proclaiming the case to be imminent, Lord Buckhurst's demands on his young friends became more urgent. Either he was afraid of losing his turn with his pretty partner, or afraid of not getting it over to keep faith with others equally fair. 'Lord John, do get a partner and stand opposite to us!' cried he.

'Sandgate, my dear fellow! *be* good-natured and make a *vis-à-vis* for us.' But Lord John did not choose to get a partner, and Lord Sandgate was not good-natured; and it was in the last despair of little Collinet's premonitory cadence that Lord Buckhurst suddenly exclaimed, 'Ha! Woodgate, how are you? when did you come to England? Miss Devereux, allow me to present Sir Henry Woodgate —Woodgate, Miss Devereux. Stand up or we shall lose our places. There is room next to Lady Honoria C——.'

Sir Henry would willingly have explained that he did not want to dance; and Miss Devereux made a pouting bow to express that she had already the honour of Sir Henry's acquaintance. But Buckhurst loved himself too sincerely to be disappointed, and his 'Come, come! Woodgate, lead your partner to her place,' was too absolute to admit of resistance without offence to the young lady. Sir Henry had not been brought up in the school of the Drewes. Aunt Agnes afforded in his mind so exquisite an illustration of the sex, that he seldom found it in his heart to demean himself ungraciously towards a woman.

Annoyed, however, at being forced to dance, which was by no means his favourite diversion, Sir Henry deposited his hat, and hurried round the half-pleased, half-angry Jessie to the vacant place.

The quadrille commenced, and Sir Henry had half walked the first figure, when he was struck by the resemblance of Lord Buckhurst's graceful partner to the attorney's daughter, whom he had left dieting on milk and water at Withamstead Hall. She had the dark hair, creamy complexion, grey eyes, rendered expressive by the blackest eyebrows and eyelashes; nay, a certain indescribably graceful turn of head and shoulders, which he remembered as peculiar to Miss Barnsley. But the fair one to whom Lord Buckhurst was devoting his attentions was at once more airy and more self-composed than Margaret; and the beautiful precision of her dress, and arrangement of her hair, proclaimed the experienced votary of fashion. There was nothing of the country girl, nothing of the attorney's daughter, in the distinguished elegance of his *vis-à-vis*.

On a first impulse, Woodgate was about to interrogate his partner, whom he had seen conversing with her; but

Jessie Devereux, indignant at his haughty apatny, had commenced a flirting conversation with her neighbour's partner —a minikin ensign in the Guards, enchanted to be flirted with by any lady, on any terms—and Sir Henry reminded himself that it would be too great a condescension on the part of a Woodgate to exercise unnecessary curiosity respecting a Barnsley.

When the figure of *La Poule*, however, brought him into hand-to-hand contact with the subject of his perplexity, Margaret removed all doubt by a slight bow of recognition. She *noticed* him—he *felt* that she noticed him; and such is the distinction conferred by beauty, that Sir Henry was forced to admit Miss Barnsley had acquired a right to become condescending; her personal charms afforded a title as unimpeachable as his honours of twenty descents.

Still she puzzled him. He could not understand how a few months of London—of dancing-masters, milliners, and *coiffeurs*—had conferred such singular distinction—a distinction warring against all his theories of the vulgarity of artificial life. For it was not alone in lightness of step, in slightness of waist, in glossiness of tresses, that Margaret evinced her progress towards perfection. There was now an air of refinement in her gestures, of intelligence in her glances, which, if attributable to the influence of fashionable society, revealed a force in the grinding powers of that vast polishing-mill, such as the coarsest granite must confess. Little did he know of the more potent charm exercised through the feelings of a young and delicate girl, whom nature makes fair, but love, lovely! of the spell which, in presence of the being whose presence is joy, imparts buoyancy to the step, brilliancy to the eye, and to the lips a beaming expression of innocent delight, such as may have brightened the looks of Eve when she discovered the first violet in Paradise.

The admiration with which Sir Henry stood contemplating the attractions of a far nobler-looking girl than the noblest of the beauties gracing King William's Flemish court, was soon to end. Margaret, not being one of the practised London damsels who are always 'looking for mamma,' on the arm of their last partner, went straight to Lady Walmer; and the almost maternal pride with which the most

distinguished matron in London received back the attorney's daughter, completed the amazement of Sir Henry.

After conveying Miss Devereux to Lord Tynemouth, by whose side it was the cue of his two giddy daughters to stand for chaperonage, while his lordship talked to some noble country neighbour of agricultural business, or to the President of the Council of homocultural business, of drill husbandry, as exercised over hundreds of acres, or thousands of men; Sir Henry tried to return towards the spot where Lady Walmer had returned his bow. He had almost coaxed his ill-humour into the condescension of inviting Miss Barnsley to dance with him. For the moment Stokeshill disappeared from his memory—perhaps Ellen Sullivan also—he saw only the graceful figure of the gentle Margaret.

Still, some invincible repugnance retarded his steps. He loitered by the way for a word with his old Eton chum, Lord Fitz-Henry, and to exchange a solemn salutation with the Belgian ambassador; and, by the time he caught sight of the bouquets of heath ornamenting the ball-dress of the Almack's Ariel, she was moving towards the dance on the arm of the most grand seigneurial of modern grand seigneurs, whose fiat confers fashions, as that of sovereigns nobility.

'*Elle est charmante!*' said Prince E—— to Lady Walmer, gazing after them, at the moment Sir Henry came up.

'*Ravissante!*' exclaimed Lord Evergreen, propped on a cane which performed the part of crutch, and a near-sighted eye-glass, whose powers were exactly adapted to the last days of Methusaleh. 'A relation of your Ladyship's?'

'A Kentish heiress, whose father has considerable influence, and votes with *us*,' replied Lady Walmer.

'I never saw poor Buckhurst so desperate before,' observed Woodgate's friend, Lord Fitz-Henry, who had accompanied him towards the group. 'One generally sees him in love three times a season; before Easter, with the last new dance from Paris; after Easter, with the last new beauty from the country; and on the eve of grouse and the Highlands, with the last woman left to ride with him in the Park.'

'So long as he finds safety in numbers, the Duke of Grantville has nothing to fear,' observed Sir Henry, in too low a voice to be overheard by Lady Walmer.

'*Fear*! His family think of nothing but marrying him. If Buckhurst were to die the dukedom would be extinct, and the estates go to Lady Maria and Lady Lavinia (which was Brereton's motive, I suspect, for jilting Lucilla Drewe). Buckhurst was just then in his first love-fit of the season for some Mademoiselle Adeline or other; and, counting on his eternal constancy, Brereton proposed to his ugly cousin and a contingency of twenty thousand a year.'

'Of which I wish him joy, should the Duke of Grantville consent to Buckhurst's marriage with Miss Barnsley.'

'The Duke consent? The question is Miss Barnsley's consent.'

'Miss Barnsley's consent!' ejaculated Woodgate, with infinite disdain.

'I can tell you, my dear fellow, that it is not to be had for asking for. She refused Sir William Ross, who has that splendid Cheshire property and Lord Ross's reversion, the first week she came out; and poor Buckhurst is driven almost out of his wits by her insensibility. I would take twenty to one that if Buckhurst proposed to her to-night, she would refuse him.'

'What's the bet?' demanded Augustus Drewe, who had sauntered towards them, and involuntarily pricked up his ears at the sound of odds.

'That Lady Walmer's pretty heiress refuses Buckhurst.'

'Refuses him what?'

'Her hand, if he should propose to her.'

'Propose to *her?* for whom? his father's groom of the chambers?'

'Propose to make her Lady Buckhurst,' observed Sir Henry Woodgate, disgusted by the cool insolence of Gus.

'I thought little Adeline was Lady Buckhurst.'

'I am talking of a marriage between the Duke of Grantville's son—'

'And a Kentish attorney's daughter!' interrupted Drewe, without moving a muscle of his countenance; 'a match between Marmaduke and a cart-filly.'

'Such comparisons are indeed odious!' cried Sir Henry Woodgate, not choosing to sanction opprobrious terms applied to the idol of his young friend Edward Sullivan. 'Miss Barnsley is a charming girl, and Lord Buckhurst in

a position that enables him to overlook her deficiencies of rank.'

'Yes! much as the Monument overlooks the mud of Blackfriars.'

'By all accounts, the mud on this occasion does not aspire to reach the Monument,' said Fitz-Henry.

'Grapes are sour, eh? taken warning by my lady sister-in-law, who made a dead set at Brereton, only to be set down. Deep 'uns, all the Buckhursts, from A to Z. Take *my* word for it, Lord Buckhurst will never be fastened on by a country miss.'

Lord Fitz-Henry looked significantly at Woodgate, as if longing to retort in the words of Midas—

'*I* take your word,—I would not take your bond, Sir!'

and Augustus Drewe, having sauntered a few feet further on the road to his supper at Crockford's, Sir Henry could not resist observing to his friend, 'What on earth brings such a man as that into a ball-room?'

'To get rid of the hours between his coffee and maraschino and devilled turkey. Almack's is as good a place to cast the slough of his *ennui* as any other. I look upon Gus as I do on one of the shrivelled leaves of Hyde Park, blown hither and thither, and withered out of all quality of use or ornament.'

'As little susceptible of pleasurable emotions as of imparting them,' added Sir Henry. 'Such men ought to seek their recreation in clubs and kennels, the betting-stand and the prize-ring.'

'By Jove! old Gus gets served out in his turn, even at his club,' observed Lord F., who was one of Lord Shoreham's set. 'The other day, at the "Travellers," he was boring Scamper, who is just returned from Alexandria in his yacht, with questions about the plague and the Pyramids, when little Quickset, of the Guards, interfered with, "Egad, Gus, *you* ought to know more about them than any of us, for you talk like a hieroglyphic and look like a mummy."'

Sir Henry replied by a forced laugh. His attention was engrossed by Margaret, as she moved with noiseless step in the quadrille before him. There was something at once so free from bashfulness, display, or affectation in her looks and movements, that with self-reproving candour, he was

forced to admit good-breeding to be an agreeable qualification. Though every eye was bent upon her, she neither assumed a downcast air nor confronted the admiring glances of her noble partner. She was perfectly at ease; more at her ease *there*, when playing so brilliant a part in the most brilliant of assemblies, than when surrounded by her own people at Wynnex Abbey.

By degrees—almost mechanically—Sir Henry circled round the quadrille, little dreaming how accurately his movements were noted by the magnet which attracted him: and, gradually approaching Margaret, requested the honour of her hand for the following quadrille. 'She was engaged to the Duke of Caserta,' one of the Neapolitan *attachés*. 'The quadrille following?' Still engaged. But Margaret replied to these flattering invitations with a blush so deep as seemed to darken the hue of her serene eyes to violet. She was, in truth, supremely gratified.

'It won't do, my dear fellow!'—cried Quickset of the Guards, an old Eton friend of Woodgate's, tapping him on the back as he retired from the scene of defeat.

'What won't do?'—

'Your making up to the Kentish heiress, who vows she won't stand anything under a peerage.'

'I am not making up to her, and I suspect she has taken no such vow,' said Sir Henry calmly; amused to find himself, twice in the same evening, standing forth as the champion of Barnsley's daughter.

'Likely enough,—for it was your friend Shoreham who told me so. Shoreham had a narrow escape from her himself. Her father was his steward or some such thing.'

'Mr. Barnsley was one of the late Lord Shoreham's executors.'

'Executor?—Well! there's only a pinch of pounce between the two. But Shoreham swears that whenever little Miss was naughty and wouldn't say her lesson, they used to threaten her she would never be Lady Shoreham. Her father almost proposed her to Shoreham. I suppose he thought it the decentest mode of restituting part of what he had robbed during the minority.'

'I have always heard that Mr. Barnsley strictly performed his duties as executor to Lord Shoreham.'

'All I know is,' said Quickset, 'that Parson Drewe and his brother smoked the whole band of them out of Wynnex Abbey.'

'I should think a little fumigation might be no bad thing there, even now,' observed Sir Henry; and thus, quizzed out of a third attempt to obtain Margaret as his partner, he retired for the night.

It is surprising how easily clever men are quizzed out of their projects, considering how widely quizzing prevails in the world. Byron, despising his age as an age of cant, converted it into the age of irony;—an age, whose physiognomy is impressed with a perpetual sneer,—whose hymns are epigrams,—whose Curtana, a doubly-pointed rapier.

Sir Henry Woodgate, with courage to face an election contest or a Hyrcanian bear, retreated before the quips and quirks of a small ensign in his Majesty's Coldstream Guards!

CHAPTER XXVI.

Margaret felt happy in the recollection, (when her garland of heath was exchanged for her considering-cap, or night-cap,) that since she had been included in Lady Walmer's invitations and occupied a seat in her opera-box, she met, every night, nearly the same set of persons. Lord Buckhurst and the Duke of Caserta never seemed absent from her side.

But her inference that because she had met Sir Henry Woodgate at Almack's, where these two adorers were always in waiting, she must meet him at all other parties where they were in attendance, proved erroneous. From Wednesday till the Wednesday ensuing, she saw no more of him. Her father, indeed, spoke of him as likely to prove an excellent member; a threat which Margaret attributed to the novel attractions of the House of Commons. But, on the arrival of the eventful half-holiday which the nation allows its helots, and lady patronesses have made their own, she prepared herself to find Sir Henry Woodgate stationed at his former post, opposite the orchestra. Nor was she disappointed. As she passed up the room with Lady Walmer, he invited her to dance. But alas! she was already engaged; and, fearing he might attribute these reiterated refusals to

ill will, she ventured to observe with a humility of manner that excused the impropriety of such a proceeding,—'I am engaged now; but, for the next quadrille, I have no partner.'

For the next quadrille, consequently, they stood up together; and the first question suggested by Sir Henry's gratitude for her concession, regarded Helen Sullivan.

'I have been most anxious,' said he, as he led her from Lady Walmer's side, 'to meet you again. I can obtain no satisfactory intelligence concerning Mrs. Sullivan and her daughter. The servants at the house in town pretend not to know whether they are at Hawkhurst or in Norfolk.'

'You are surely aware,' said Margaret, as drily as she was capable of speaking, 'that since the election, we have held no communication with Hawkhurst?'

'I was sorry to learn that the part taken by Mr. Sullivan in my favour, had produced a coolness between your father and himself.'

'On the contrary, the breach between him and my father, produced I believe poor Mr. Sullivan's efforts in your favour,' observed Margaret, calmly. 'But do not let us talk of him. —Peace be with the dead.'

'Before we quit the subject, however, suffer me to inquire whether you have heard nothing of your friend, from Lord Buckhurst?'

'I have never heard Lord Buckhurst mention the name of the Sullivans. He concludes, I suppose, that the subject cannot be agreeable to me.'

'Let us change it, then!' said Sir Henry, with a smile. 'Exonerate me, however, by bringing to mind that there *was* a time when Helena and Hermia were not more'—

'Do not say *was*,'—interrupted Margaret. 'I still dearly love my friend Helen. I wrote to her at her father's death, and have received no answer to my letter; but the precarious state of Mrs. Sullivan's health probably requires her constant attendance. I am not sure whether they are at Hawkhurst.'

'Thank you,' said Sir Henry, stiffly. 'I must try to obtain further intelligence to-morrow, for your account is more concise than satisfactory.' And a movement in the quadrille prevented all necessity for a rejoinder.

'You have been passing the winter, I think, in Belgium?'

—inquired Margaret, when the first pause brought them together. 'I hope you left Miss Woodgate well?'—

'Quite well; but I have been less with her than you may suppose. Agnes is one of those self-denying people who will not even accept the society of those she loves, when she imagines them likely to be better amused elsewhere. My mother wished to have me with her for the carnival, after recovering the dangerous attack of fever which called me away from Withamstead last December.'

'Then you had a very gay season?'—

'I am not a ball man,—not a military man,—and the fêtes of the Princess Royal were no less thrown away upon me than the reviews of Prince Frederick. But it was as easy to devote myself to my own pursuits in my mother's hotel, as I am likely to find it in town.'

'You have now a more active life before you,' said Margaret, 'Papa finds his time wholly occupied with business.'

'So I fancy he did in Kent. It is on account of the multiplicity of Mr. Barnsley's avocations, I conclude, that Lady Walmer officiates as your chaperon?'

'Ah!—you are aiming to know the motive of Lady Walmer's good-nature in producing to society a person so obscure as myself?' interrupted Margaret, with an arch smile.

'Pardon me,' replied Sir Henry, relapsing into something of his former contemptuous sternness,—so ungenial to his reserved temper was any familiar pleasantry which tended to overthrow him from his pedestal,—'I form no surmises on subjects which do not concern me.'

And during the remainder of the quadrille, he uttered not a syllable. His bow, on resigning her hand to Lady Walmer, bore unequivocal marks of displeasure.

'What a disagreeable fellow my friend Woodgate is grown!' observed Lord Fitz-Henry, who was still standing in conversation with Lady Walmer.

'He is not generally agreeable;—he is no popularity-seeker,'—observed Margaret.

'Which *I* call a great impertinence.'

'Everything depends upon the degree in which we are accountable to society,' replied Margaret, in a low voice.

'Every one is accountable to society!' observed Lord Fitz-

Henry, who had never before heard Lady Walmer's *protégée* express so decided an opinion.

'Every *woman*.—But though *we* are the bond-slaves of the world, I cannot consider a man to be in the same subservient position.'

'My friend Woodgate, in short, has a right to be as disagreeable as he pleases?'

Margaret smiled, almost assentingly, but made no answer.

''Tis curious enough, faith,' said Lord Fitz-Henry, 'that only a week ago, I heard Woodgate take up your defence, in this very room;—and now you have become his champion! Yet, when I watched you dancing just now, you seemed to have only incivilities to bestow upon each other.'

'Of whom are you speaking, Lord Fitz-Henry?'—inquired Lady Walmer, joining in the conversation. 'That is the first suspicious charge I have heard made against my young friend.'

Margaret coloured deeply; for she was by no means inclined that Lady Walmer's attention should be directed towards Sir Henry Woodgate. Her blush confirmed the suspicions of Lord Fitz-Henry.

'We were talking of Lord Buckhurst,' said he, with a significant glance at Margaret; who, not choosing to enter into a confederacy on such a subject, replied frankly, 'No,—we were talking of Sir Henry Woodgate.' Lady Walmer put up her glass,—her customary mode of screening the expression of her countenance when she heard what she did not like. She was too desirous to make Margaret a Duchess, to approve of the petulance attributed by Lord Fitz-Henry to Woodgate's influence over her *protégée*. It happened, however, that Margaret accidentally set forth the only qualification of Sir Henry likely to raise him in the estimation of the Countess, by adding,—'of Sir Henry Woodgate, who has just come into parliament for Westerton.'

'Upon the same principles as your father?' demanded Lady Walmer, with a scrutinizing glance.

'The same political principles.'

Lady Walmer replied by a stare, which seemed to inquire, 'What other principles exist in the civilized world?' But, as Lord Buckhurst just then made his appearance, to

mount guard over Margaret for the remainder of the evening, it seemed desirable to drop all further consideration of the man or member, whose cause was so warmly defended by Miss Barnsley.

That night Margaret retired to rest uneasy. Sir Henry had pointedly avoided all further occasion of addressing her. It was plain that he was irrevocably offended. Having met in the doorway of the tea-room, he contrived to elevate his chin, and pass her by without letting fall a look upon her, with a gesture copied from one, of whose gestures all London seems bent on imitation. Margaret felt an oppression at her heart while recollecting that on the following and the Friday night, questions of great moment would be before the House, and Sir Henry doubtless at his post; and that it might be a week before they met again. A week contained seven days!—Seven days' estrangement might fix him in irremediable dislike!—Seven such days were worse than seven weeks spent by herself at Stokeshill and Sir Henry at Ghent.

On the Saturday night, however, as Lady Walmer and herself were hastening up to their opera-box for the second act of the Gazza, they were met at the top of the stairs by Lord Henry Marston; who, being stopped by the Countess with an inquiry concerning some particular of the preceding night's debate, referred her to Woodgate, who was on his arm, and whom he took the opportunity to present in form to her Ladyship's acquaintance.

Occasions for a little fine lady *tripotage* were never neglected by Lady Walmer. The distinctions of Whig and Tory were almost less important in her eyes, than the distinction which marked the Tories of Lord Walmer's flock from those of Lord Henry Marston; and, longing to see the red cross on the shoulder of this new knight, she extended a gracious invitation to Sir Henry into her box, which Miss Barnsley, with a beating heart, heard courteously accepted. Nothing was easier than to fix her attention upon Malibran, the moment they arrived in the box,—leaving Lady Walmer to expend upon Woodgate the full flow of that political jargon which she mistook for argument; but, at intervals, she could not fail to catch words and phrases, such as she was now habituated to hear fall from the finely-formed lips

of Lady Walmer, more especially when so fortunate as to obtain a new auditor.

If women could but know, *par parenthèse*, how completely they disfigure themselves by talking politics!—If they would but believe how unfitted to the texture of a woman's mind and the habits of her education, is a subject demanding the assiduous study even of a vigorous, manly understanding!—It is not a few phrases pirated from the pamphlets of the day, or the conversation of those public men who deign to accept, in their political night-gown and slippers, the incense of a circle of fair votaresses that suffice to qualify the dissertations into which we hear these would-be Aspasias plunge headlong, like Sam Patch into the Fall of Niagara! —Lady Walmer, always beautiful, often brilliant, and endowed with a thousand womanly attractions, little dreamed how immeasurably she sank in the estimation of every man of sense, when indulging in such tirades as that with which she was boring Sir Henry Woodgate. Political tirades were scarcely endurable from the lips of a Madame de Stael, and are but an unmeaning mystification from those of any other woman. Such attempts remind one, *not* of Helen smiling gracefully in the armour of Paris, but of Venus rapping her delicate knuckles by hammering the anvil of Vulcan!

Some such commentary as this was probably passing in the mind of Sir Henry, as he attempted to appear to listen; for Margaret noticed that he did not even attempt to appear to reply:—he kept his oratory for his speeches in the house, and his judgment for the speeches of others. But the moment a new visitor appeared in the box, who, being an ambassador, was entitled to a fresh outpouring of Lady Walmer's diplomatic tactics, Woodgate leaned towards Miss Barnsley to inquire, in a courteous tone, whether he should have the pleasure of meeting her at a ball at Devonshire House the following Monday?—Under such encouragement, she bore patiently with the silly prattle of Lord Buckhurst, after Sir Henry had left the box!

A happy surprise, too, awaited her on the morrow. Mr. Barnsley, having given her a list of persons to whom she was to address dinner cards for the following Saturday, there appeared among them the name of Sir Henry; for

though, after the custom of parliamentary dinners, no ladies were to appear at table, Margaret was pleased at the idea of any advance in acquaintanceship between Woodgate and her father. She wished him to see 'the attorney' presiding like a gentleman and a man of sense, over his well-appointed household.

But alas! the answer was negative. There was studied courtesy indeed, in the phrasing of the excuse, which went so far as to mention that it was to Lord Henry Marston he was under a pre-engagement, as if to certify the authenticity of the plea; and, on the Monday night, when Barnsley by invitation escorted his pretty daughter to Devonshire House, Sir Henry so pointedly repeated the expression of his regrets, that he seemed to invite the invitation which followed. This time, however, it was not a political dinner; but to meet Lord Withamstead's family and a few other Kentish neighbours, without ceremony, on the following day.

'Young Woodgate and I get on together pretty well now,' was Barnsley's remark to Margaret, while waiting to resign her to Lady Walmer, the moment the Countess made her appearance; 'which is very lucky, as we have so often to act in unison. I sat near him the other day at the Speaker's dinner; and was gratified by the change in his demeanour towards me, since poor Sullivan's death.'

Mr. Barnsley was, in fact, in a state of mind to be satisfied with all the world.—He had been congratulated by three persons, or personages, since he entered the room, upon his daughter's approaching marriage with Lord Buckhurst; and as Margaret, who was dancing with the young Marquis, was not at hand, to interpose the contradiction she would probably have given, in terms not to be mistaken for girlish coyness, the rumour only gained confirmation from his flurried mode of protesting that he knew nothing of the matter. The mere report of such a thing enchanted him; for, with the exception of the management of the Thellusson property, or his own appointment to be Lord Chancellor, what could inspire him with such glee, as the idea of beholding his daughter a duchess?

There was something almost chimerical to Barnsley in the social distinctions he had already attained. After his labours

In his county's cause, his alliance with Wynnex Abbey, his officious administration of all the business of all the world, it was to the fact of being father to a daughter just then the idol of the *beau-monde*, he was indebted for being present at a ball at Devonshire House. His own activity had got him into the House of Commons:—Margaret's beauty, into the House of Lords. All his life long he had been looking to membership of parliament, as the thing that was to institute his station in the world; and now the eminence of which he had been twenty years ambitious, was achieved by a little insignificant girl, who, throughout those twenty years, had been sporting unnoticed by his side!—Still,—for the discovery was a reproof to his self-love,—he could not help feeling that Margaret's beauty might have bloomed unseen, but for the prominent point in which she was placed by the fosterage of Lady Walmer;—a tribute indisputably paid to his seat in parliament.

Such was the line of argument by which Barnsley strove to satisfy himself that Margaret's strawberry-leaves were but a substitute for the laurels which ought to have crowned his own deserts;—and the grave face with which he stood, hat in hand, among the outermost *cordon sanitaire* of elderlies and chaperons, elicited in his favour more than one remark of—'No trace certainly of his daughter's beauty in that Mr. Barnsley; but a worthy, country-gentlemanlike looking man,—quite the air of a county member.' Margaret would have been more gratified, had she overheard these comments, than by all the exaggerated enthusiasm lavished on herself.

It was perhaps the agreeable impression produced on Barnsley's mind by the events of the ball, which caused him to grant an immediate assent to his daughter's application for leave to visit the Sullivans, the following morning. They were in Berkeley Square for a day, on their way from Hawkhurst to Leamington; and Helen had written to request, in her mother's name, that Margaret would pay them a visit.

'Yes, my dear, order the carriage after breakfast, and wait upon Mrs. Sullivan. I have no wish to perpetuate family quarrels. I would willingly bury all recollection of the past in poor Sullivan's grave!' said he; and the graciousness of this remark caused Margaret to look admiringly

towards Miss Winston, who shook her head in pathetic sympathy with the Christian benevolence of her patron. Neither of them suspected that Barnsley was alive only to the necessity of conciliating every collateral member of the Buckhurst family, with a view to the approaching aggrandisement of his child.

On entering Mrs. Sullivan's room, Margaret was deeply affected by the sight of her pallor and exhaustion. It was impossible to doubt that her valuable life was drawing to an end; that the eyes so dim and hollow, were about to open to the radiant glories of eternity. Miss Barnsley approached the couch of the dying woman with a degree of reverence amounting to awe; and could not refrain from affectionately pressing the hand of Helen, at the idea that her young friend, lately so happy, in the love and protection of her parents, was about to become an orphan.

Mrs. Sullivan smiled faintly as she approached; and not only extended her transparent feverish hand to bid her welcome, but drew her gently down and imprinted a kiss upon her forehead. Margaret trusted that the invalid was too much self-engrossed to mark her emotion; too young to know that a dying mother's thoughts are seldom otherwise engrossed than by the destinies of her children.

'My dear Margaret,' said Mrs. Sullivan, 'I sent for you from all the gay scenes you are engaged in, *not* that you might be dispirited by the sight of that dear girl's black gown, or her mother's pale face; but because I am ordered to Leamington, as a last chance of recovery, and feel that there is very little probability of my return.'

'Do not say so, dear Mrs. Sullivan,' said Margaret, taking her place on the low stool pushed forward by Helen to the side of her mother's sofa. 'Change of air and scene—'

Mrs. Sullivan interrupted this established routine of sick-room condolence. 'No! all *that* is over,' said she, with gasping breath; 'and I wished to see you, my dear Margaret,—for we shall never meet again.'

Helen Sullivan withdrew precipitately. She had wished to be present at the interview; but, feeling it impossible to restrain her feelings while her mother talked in that voice, and that strain,—she flew to her own room to sob away her

agony unmolested,—that worst of agonies,—the parting of a good daughter from a tender mother.

'It has been long my wish, my dear,' continued Mrs. Sullivan, 'to say a few words to you respecting my son Edward.' Margaret's colour went and came, as she sat trembling at the idea of the pain she might be about to inflict, in replying to the dying mother's interrogations. 'I am aware of the answer given by your father, and yourself under your father's authority, to his proposals. All I wish to learn is, whether the plea assigned of your youth and Mr. Barnsley's desire to postpone your settlement in life, was the *real* objection?'

'I—I believe so,'—faltered Margaret.

'As regards yourself, you must be *certain*. Was it because you felt too young to marry, that——?'

'I acted wholly in obedience to my father's commands,' interrupted Margaret, wishing to anticipate the inquiry.

'And your father's objections were grounded partly on your inexperience, and partly on the want of fortune of my son?'—

Margaret hesitated.

'Dear Margaret, own the truth,' said the poor invalid, in a tone of encouragement. 'Your father thought, as he had a right to think, that you were entitled to connect yourself more advantageously than with a younger son?'

'I believe such was his opinion.'

'Thank God!'—feebly ejaculated Mrs. Sullivan, clasping her hands upon her hollow bosom. 'I may, therefore, hope to witness, ere I die, the happiness of my beloved son!—Edward's fortunes are wholly changed by the recent calamity in our family. It was not our custom to pry into my poor husband's affairs. I knew I might rely on his equity, and never troubled myself to inquire respecting either my own prospects or my children's. But, since everything has been in the hands of lawyers, it has come out that the Brereton estates cannot be held by the holder of the Hawkhurst property. My eldest son, having naturally inherited the Sullivan property, resigns the name and estates of Brereton to his brother Edward. Your father, I trust, will form no objection to a young man of unblemished character, with a fortune of nearly ten thousand a year, and every prospect of a revival of the Chilton peerage.'

Margaret was silent.

'Surely, my dear child, you do not imagine that his ambition has still higher views for you?'—faltered Mrs. Sullivan.

'So few months have elapsed since he refused Mr. Edward Sullivan's proposals, on the grounds of my being too young, that ——'

'But you admitted, just now, that this objection was a pretext.'

'Indeed, dear Mrs. Sullivan, I have no reason to think papa wishes me to marry.'

'Not immediately. But with a highly advantageous proposal, he would scarcely refuse to accede to a conditional engagement?'

'Not if he knew my affections to be engaged.'

'But, my dearest Margaret, you surely will have no further reserves from your father?—You will prove, on such an occasion, that you possess some firmness of character?—that you have ceased to be a child, and have put away childish things.'

Involuntarily, Margaret took the hand of the poor invalid, who was courting the infliction of so much pain.

'Edward was with me during the three months I spent at Buckhurst with my sister,' resumed Mrs. Sullivan. 'The arrangements for my eldest son's marriage with his cousin Lavinia, brought this subject naturally into discussion between us; and he admitted his conviction, that if you could be brought to make a declaration of the state of your feelings to Mr. Barnsley, your father would relent in his favour.'

A little nettled at this cool inference of her preference, Margaret took courage to observe—'I do not imagine that any confessions I have to make would alter my father's views of the case.'

'At all events, the trial is worth attempting,' said poor Mrs. Sullivan, blinded by her maternal predilections. 'Edward is on the point of addressing to Mr. Barnsley a statement of the altered nature of his prospects; which, after all that has passed, you must admit to be a considerable sacrifice of pride on the part of my son. But he wishes to obtain such a previous promise of support on your part, as may warrant him in the renewal of his addresses.'

'But indeed, I have none to give!'—cried Margaret, unable to stoop to further dissimulation. 'I do assure you, dearest Mrs. Sullivan, that Edward's accession of fortune will effect no change either in my father's sentiments or my own.'

'At least, my dear, it serves to remove your objections?'

Margaret was again silent.

'Am I to conclude then,' demanded Mrs. Sullivan, after a pause, deeply mortified by this unlooked-for check of her expectations, 'that you are not sufficiently attached to Edward to become his wife?'

Still, Margaret was silent.

'Poor Edward!—either he has deceived himself or you have strangely deceived him!'—said Mrs. Sullivan, withdrawing her hand from Margaret's shoulder.

'You are displeased with me; yet, believe me, I am not to blame!' said Margaret. 'Edward was my playfellow. I loved him as I love Helen,—though in a less degree. The idea of love or marriage, as connected with myself or him, had never entered my head when he wrote that rash letter of proposal. It was easy, therefore, to obey, when my father bade me write word that I was too young to marry. I have never seen Edward since;—nor at any time felt disposed to think of him as a lover.'

'And have you seen no other person, Margaret, of whom you feel inclined to think as a lover?' said Mrs. Sullivan, faintly.

'I have acquired no right to avow a preference for any other,' said Margaret.

'Some hope, then, still remains for Edward?'

'*None*,—even were my affections disengaged,' said Margaret, hurt to find herself thus unfairly pressed. 'My father has received such cruel affronts from Mr. Brereton, and others of his family, that I could not even desire him to overlook his resentment.'

'Even were your affections disengaged!'—reiterated Mrs. Sullivan, caring only for the first words of the sentence. 'You *have*, then, formed an attachment?'

'I have, Madam, a presumptuous and unauthorised attachment,—but one that I feel will—'

She paused. A low knock was heard at the door; and

Helen peeping in, acquainted her mother that her cousin Buckhurst was on the stairs.

'Go to him, my love!' said Mrs. Sullivan, faintly. But Lord Buckhurst, attracted to enter the house only by the sight of Mr. Barnsley's carriage at the door, was already in the dressing-room, appealing to his aunt, with whom he felt assured of finding Margaret. While he came forward with inquiries after the night she had passed, and the state of her cough, the object of his visit contrived to slip away unperceived; and, after taking an affectionate leave of Helen, quitted the house.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Sullivan's emotion was too manifest to escape the notice of the young Marquis, and his inquiries gradually drew forth the true state of the case. His aunt, secluded from London rumours, was scarcely aware that even a common acquaintance subsisted between him and Margaret Barnsley. In the vehemence of her love for her dear Edward, it was impossible not to accuse Margaret of hard-heartedness,—of ingratitude.

'Perhaps,' said Lord Buckhurst, watching the countenance of the invalid, 'perhaps she may have formed some attachment?'

'She does not even deny it!' cried poor Mrs. Sullivan.

Lord Buckhurst's eyes brightened.

'She admits that since the period of Edward's proposals, she has become acquainted with some one to whom she accords a preference.'

'Helen!' said Lord Buckhurst, to his cousin, who was re-entering the room after having watched the departure of Margaret's carriage, 'come and sit with your mother.—My aunt is agitated.—Try to make her compose herself.—I only came to inquire after you all.—I have an appointment this morning with Lady Walmer.—Good-bye,—good-bye!'

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Duke and Duchess of Grantville were persons chiefly remarkable for simplicity of mind; and a prudent knowledge that, although endowed with means for the maintenance of their hereditary rank, they had not fortune to compete with

certain British peers whose wealth raises them to the level of foreign sovereignty.

The father of his Grace, though only Marquis of Buckhurst, having discovered that Newmarket and White's were becoming too much for his patrimonial oaks, determined to see only so much of London as was inseparable from his duties of Master of the Horse; and his son, when afterwards promoted a step higher in the peerage, had rather increased than disregarded the barriers set up by his predecessor, had married a woman of the same moderate views as himself, and devoted his days to domestic life and the country. 'One fine London entertainment,' he used to say in answer to the remonstrances of his eldest daughter, Lady Maria, 'would impoverish my household for six months. We can do good and make ourselves happy at Buckhurst;—why parade our poverty in Park Lane?'

By a man of so much practical philosophy, Lady Lavinia's marriage with her cousin Brereton was regarded as an excellent match; and, had Lord Buckhurst chosen to draw still closer the ties of consanguinity by an alliance with Helen, the consent of the Duke and Duchess would have been readily obtained. Helen was to inherit her mother's fortune of fifty thousand pounds; was unexceptionably amiable; and what more could they desire for their son?—The idea of putting up his son and coronet to be bid for in an heiress auction, never entered the honourable head of the Duke; and nothing more amazed him than the mingled hauteur and cupidity of his brother-in-law of Hawkhurst Hill.

When, therefore, it was intimated to the Duchess of Grantville, in a letter from some officious London friend, that their son was desperately in love with the prettiest girl in London, only daughter of a member of parliament of large property in Kent, she congratulated herself and her husband with affectionate cordiality. The Duke being in indifferent health, charmed under the magnetising rod of a homœopathic doctor in the neighbourhood of Buckhurst Lodge, was passing the early part of the summer in Norfolk; and thus, unable to interrogate Lord Buckhurst, he despatched a 'private and confidential' letter to his friend Lord Walmer, begging him to inquire into the business, and let them know the result.

The Grantvilles could not have chanced upon a source of information more favourable to Margaret.—The Walmers had become attached to the beautiful girl who bore her faculties so meekly, and whom their utmost endeavours did not suffice to spoil. In Barnsley, they saw only *a vote*;—a man of fortune, moreover, with a good flow of conversation for a dinner-table, and a good dinner-table for a flow of conversation. Lord Walmer did not hesitate to say,—(for he hesitated to say nothing that was dictated by his wife,) that unless they wished Buckhurst to form a marriage of ambition, he could do nothing better than make a Marchioness of Margaret Barnsley.

Upon this hint, the Grantvilles wrote to their son; and evinced their gratitude to Lady Walmer, by entreating her to break the ground for them with the Barnsleys; for Lady Walmer loved nothing in this life so well as a negotiation! —Diplomacy was her delight; and in inditing the epistle to Lord Buckhurst appointing the morning after the ball at Devonshire House for an interview, she felt as magnanimously *grandiose* as Catherine II. after founding a city,—or Christina, after stabbing the secretary she had robbed of his despatches. Unobservant of the agitation in which the young man rushed into her Blue Chamber fresh from his interview with Mrs. Sullivan, she entered into a mysterious preamble, long and unintelligible enough for the preliminaries of a treaty of peace; and spoke of her exertions past, present, and to come, in removing doubts from the mind of his parents, and scruples from that of Barnsley, much as she might have described the prodigious movements of a hundred-horse power engine.

All, however, ended to the satisfaction of both parties. The Countess was enraptured to find herself intrusted with the negotiation of the affair, and the Marquis to have the weight thereof removed from his shoulders. All he wished was to gaze, and sigh, and whisper in the ear of Margaret. Lady Walmer was heartily welcome to squabble about settlements and pin-money with old Barnsley.

There was the opera that night—his usual place of weekly beatification. But Margaret had excused herself on account of the formal dinner-party at home; and as there was no question of general or Kentish interest before the House, he

felt that he could not reach even her father by strolling down to Palace Yard. Just about dinner-time, however, as Buckhurst was sauntering on horseback along Curzon Street, for the twentieth time that day, he observed the cabriolet of Woodgate stop; and Sir Henry, black, varnished, and smiling, jump out, equipped for dinner. The grand heraldic body coach of Lord Withamstead followed, crammed with Holloways and pomposity; and never had the Duke-apparent so longed to be included in a dinner-party, as in that stupid assemblage.

For the tribe of Holloway, ever dull, was not brightened by gilding!—Panic-struck at finding himself refused by Helen Sullivan a few days previously to her father's fatal accident, George was perplexed whether to sink his pride and appropriate to his future title the reversion of the fertile acres of Stokeshill, or sink his avarice, and ennoble himself with the hand of Lady Florence O'Callaghan, the daughter of a landless Irish Earl.

His weird sisters were furious at the extraordinary greatness thrust upon the attorney's daughter, whom they had always threatened to patronise on their accession of rank; and who, as the favourite of Lady Walmer and beloved of Lord Buckhurst, they were forced to contemplate with upturned and wondering eyes;—while poor old Lady Withamstead, withered by transportation from her natural soil and atmosphere, like some old vegetable moved too late in the season, felt, as she graphically expressed herself to Miss Winston, 'neither here nor there;' and was beginning to sigh for the days when it was not *infra dig.* to tax her housekeeper's account, and squabble with the butler about the allowance of wine for the second table.

Woodgate, who, with the utmost respect for the old squire of Withamstead, had very little patience for the new Lord of that name, came prepared for a disagreeable party. Recollecting the contemptuous air of superiority with which the two ancient damsels had overpowered Miss Barnsley in Kent, he so far reckoned on the frailty of the sex as to fear she would retaliate by flinging Almack's in their teeth, and dazzling them with the galvanic coruscations of fashion. But, to his infinite satisfaction, the young lady was forbearing—not an allusion to Lady Walmer—not a sentence in-

tending to drag on the Grantville chapter of her conquests. Margaret spoke of Withamstead, their own chief vantage ground; and would not stir out of Kent, which was certainly far from being her own. She talked to Miss Felicia of infant-schools, and Miss Holloway of her botanical garden; —while the old lady crept unnoticed out of her suit of buckram, and maundered to poor Miss Winston about a celebrated Withamstead recipe for Chedder cheese. Gladly would George Holloway have doubled his deafness to escape the snatches of his mother's discourse, as they occasionally reached his ear; such as—'Set your milk in a shallow glazed pan,'—or—'Be sure to turn your cheeses when the weather is close.'—What a dissertation for a peeress of the realm!

In spite, however, of the tediousness of the party, Sir Henry, instead of adjourning from the dinner-table to the opera, according to his intention, found himself listening to Margaret's performance of some canzonets of Withers', at the express desire of Lord Withamstead, who loved young voices married to old music. Her singing, like her talking, was devoid of pretension; and the old man was grateful to her for not flourishing over simple English ballads, after the false taste of the Drewes.

It was just at the conclusion of one of these madrigals, which had soothed the gentle George into a snore, and his father into pleasing reminiscences of the ancient music in his George-the-Thirdian days, that a note was brought in to Barnsley, which caused his eyes to twinkle with triumph; —a note from the lady of the Right Honourable the Earl of Walmer, demanding at what hour it would be convenient for her to be received in Curzon Street on the morrow, for the transaction of some business of importance; and, though his answer merely stated that all the hours of his day, and all the days of his week were at her Ladyship's disposal, he made as great an effort to demand permission of Lady Withamstead and her daughter to retire and write it, as if the act rivalled in importance the signing of Magna Charta.

His daughter neither expressed nor felt the slightest curiosity on the subject.—Sir Henry did her the justice of admiring that, amid the absurd demonstrations of her father, Margaret retained her serenity. He was almost as much surprised as pleased to observe that the flatteries of society,

so apt to exercise a disadvantageous influence over the character of very young persons, had imparted to hers only the self-possession in which she had been so eminently wanting at their first encounter in the library of Wynnex Abbey.

After the Holloways had departed to their new and aristocratic home in Carlton Gardens, mortified to perceive how much their grandeur was lost upon people living in the very heart of a society to the outskirts of which they scarcely dared append themselves, Barnsley communicated to his daughter the missive of Lady Walmer.

'I dare say,' said he, 'she wants me to sound my friend Latitat, who manages the Cumberland interest at Felton.'

'I rather think, papa,' said Margaret, 'that Lady Walmer wishes to employ you as treasurer of the charity for merchants' widows, to become her almoner, and receive her proxy.'

Miss Winston said nothing. A shrewd presentiment assured her that her happiness was in danger from some new proposal of marriage.

The following day, precisely at the appointed hour of one, appeared Lady Walmer, beautiful, high-bred, well-intentioned; but marring all by the fussy air of flurrying officiousness, intended to mark to the world that it could not possibly get on without her. Her mission with the Barnsleys, for instance, was of a nature calculated to give pleasure to herself and them; yet she could not help deteriorating her good services by a preliminary discourse, of which here and there a word bitterly humiliated the pride of her auditor. She said things in the name of the worthy Grantvilles, which they would not have said for themselves; and, on the whole, at the close of her lengthy oration, Barnsley felt rather affronted than pleased that his daughter was likely to become a Marchioness.

'Of course, my dear sir, you will empower me to state to the family what it is your intention to do for my charming young friend, and to what extent her fortune will be increased at your death. It cannot be expected that you should pledge yourself not to enter into a second marriage state. I should strongly advise you to go the utmost lengths, with the view to secure a connexion so beyond my utmost expectations for my *protégée*. I promised to do

what I could for Miss Barnsley; but I confess it did not enter my remotest calculations that I should marry her to the only son of the Duke of Grantville!'

'My daughter, I am proud to admit, is greatly indebted to your Ladyship's kindness, but——'

'When the Duke arrives in town, (for an event so important in his family will probably bring him back to London,') interrupted Lady Walmer, attaching very little importance to anything uttered by Barnsley, saving his 'ay' or 'no' in a division—'I think I may venture to promise that Lord Walmer will be happy to undertake the necessary introduction between you; meanwhile, as I must write by this day's post to acquaint the Duke and Duchess of your gratified acceptance——'

'Will it not be better then for us to communicate immediately with my daughter?'—interrupted Barnsley, in his turn, somewhat startled by this precipitancy. 'I am entirely ignorant of Margaret's dispositions towards Lord Buckhurst.'

'Oh! with respect to a young lady's dispositions towards a handsome young man, the heir of a dukedom, we shall not, I apprehend, be kept in much suspense. However, now the proposal has been properly made to yourself, there can be no objection to mentioning it to Margaret. I can give you five minutes longer,' she continued, taking her Breguet from her bosom.—'Pray, beg Miss Barnsley to let me speak a few words to her.'

Expecting such a summons, Margaret, with her simple white dress and glossy black hair arranged with simple, but scrupulous precision, was soon seated beside Lady Walmer, looking like a lily of the valley planted next a crown imperial. With all her deference towards the Countess, she could hardly refrain from a smile at the peremptory terms in which Lady Walmer announced the immensity of her impending good-fortune.

'Let me be the first to congratulate you, my dear,' said she, kissing the pure white forehead of her *protégée*, 'on an event which I am proud to attribute to the introduction to society I have been able to procure you. At present, no step need be taken on your part. For some time longer, the negotiations will pass through myself, the Duke of

Grantville, and your father; but the moment it becomes necessary for *you* to act I shall be extremely happy to make you *au fait* to the part it will be desirable for you to take in the business. It is true, I am just now sadly engaged, from having my sister, the Countess de la Fare, in England, and Lord Walmer's mother in town;—but you may count upon me, my dear Margaret, to give up to you a reasonable portion of my time in the various perplexities and ceremonies in which you must necessarily be involved by the preliminaries of such a marriage.'

Margaret saw that Lady Walmer considered *her* judgment as unimportant in accepting the proposals of the Marquis of Buckhurst, as her father had held it, eight months before, in refusing those of Edward Sullivan; and was for a moment puzzled in what terms to frame an elucidation of the business.

'I am fully aware of your ladyship's kindness on this and other occasions,' said she, at last. 'But you greatly misapprehend my feelings towards Lord Buckhurst.'

'Do not imagine, my love, that we wish to force you to confession,'—said Lady Walmer, smiling with an air of significant superiority at Barnsley, in the idea that Margaret was about to favour them with a display of missish prudery. 'We do not wish you to commit yourself by a word on the subject more than you desire. Lord Buckhurst must extort from you all he hopes to hear, after the more important preliminaries are adjusted.'

'But it is to prevent this, dear Lady Walmer, that I entreat your interference,' said Margaret, perceiving that she must speak plain to be understood. 'As it is impossible for me to accept the proposal which the Duke of Grantville has condescended to sanction,—'

'*My dear!*'—cried her father, starting from the chair in which he had been impatiently listening to Lady Walmer's initiatory chapter; while the colour of the Countess, rising to her temples, made even her rouge look pale.

'I have never encouraged any particular attentions on the part of Lord Buckhurst,' resumed Margaret.

'Certainly not,' interrupted Lady Walmer. '*I* should not of course have permitted anything of the kind. Still, I concluded that you duly appreciated the distinction

and honour you were receiving at the hands of Lord Buckhurst.'

'Not to assume the vindication of the dignity of my sex,' said Margaret, with a smile which the Countess thought extremely impertinent,—'let me only assure you that, till within the last week, I was ignorant Lord Buckhurst meant more in his attentions than twenty other young men with whom your ladyship has done me the honour to make me acquainted. The family seemed so much to resent papa's refusal of his cousin, Edward Sullivan, that—'

'Edward Sullivan!—a younger son!—a beggar!'—cried Lady Walmer, with disgust.

'Not *quite* a beggar, since by his father's death he has come into possession of the Brereton estates,' observed Margaret.

'I fancy you are mistaken,' said Lady Walmer.

'I repeat only what I learned from Mrs. Sullivan.'

'Are we to understand, then,' demanded her father, 'that the repugnance you seem disposed to assign as a motive for declining one of the most brilliant matches in England, is caused by your preference of Mr. Sullivan, or Brereton,—or whatever we are now to call him?'

'No, dear papa!' said Margaret. 'When you first refused Edward's proposals, I did not allow myself to inquire what might *then* have been my inclinations on the subject. But I have lately repeated that refusal on my own account, without referring the proposal to yourself—being fully aware of your objections.'

'You have again refused him?'—cried her father, with a glance of triumph brightening his countenance.

'I have, sir.'

'You are a fortunate young lady, my dear,' said Lady Walmer, with a supercilious smile, 'to have coronets and fortunes flung in this manner at your head!—But, permit me to tell you, that were you a daughter of mine to decline such opportunities——'

'You would not, I am sure, press them on her acceptance, were she to tell you, as I do now, that they would be fatal to her happiness,' said Margaret, mildly, but with firmness.

'At your age, how should you know what will conduce to your happiness?'—said Lady Walmer.

'At my age, then, surely I am too young to marry?'—answered Margaret, more cheerfully.

'In short,' cried Lady Walmer, rising and shaking her ruffled plumes, 'we are to understand that Miss Barnsley disinterestedly renounces a Duke of Grantville with twenty thousand a-year, and a Mr. Brereton with ten, for the sake of some more favourite swain,—some ensign in the guards,—or—'

'Pray do not be angry with me, dear Lady Walmer!' said Margaret, trembling lest by degrees she should approach nearer to the truth.

'Angry!—What pretensions have I to be angry?—I am not aware, Miss Barnsley, of any tie between us sufficiently close to entitle me to be angry with any excess of absurdity of which you may choose to be guilty!—Mr. Barnsley,—do me the favour to ascertain whether my carriage is at the door,' continued the Countess.

'My daughter will think better of all this; Margaret has not had time to give due consideration to a matter of so much importance,' remonstrated Barnsley, as he laid his hand upon the bell;—terrified lest his evanescent vision of a ducal coronet in his family should so speedily disappear.

'I beg I may have nothing further to do with the business!'—said Lady Walmer, haughtily. 'All I undertook was to lay it before Miss Barnsley and her family, who have not even deigned to consult my opinion on the subject.—It only remains for me to submit their peremptory refusal to the Duke of Grantville.'

'Surely, your ladyship will favour me with a day's delay?'—said Barnsley, intercedingly. 'Surely it is not essential that his Grace's answer should be dispatched by return of post? Surely he must have expected—'

'He expected, probably, some small degree of consideration from Miss Margaret Barnsley,' said Lady Walmer,—standing considerably taller than usual.

'Margaret will listen to reason!'—implored poor Barnsley. 'I am convinced Margaret will listen to reason!'

'Not from *me*!'—cried Lady Walmer. '*I* wash my hands of the business. I wish to hear no more of the matter!—Miss Barnsley may settle her affairs as she likes best.'

'But what can she like better than a match such as this?'

—cried Barnsley, almost beside himself. 'As your ladyship justly observes, the only son of a duke—a charming young man,—a——'

'I observed nothing of the kind, that I recollect,' said the Countess, her *hauteur* increasing as she contemplated the disagreeable ceremony of announcing to the Grantvilles the failure of her negotiation. 'The carriage if you please!'—she continued, addressing the servants by whom the bell was now answered.

'Will you at least afford me the honour of a few minutes' private conference?'—cried Barnsley at his wits' end.

'My dearest father,—you distress yourself to little purpose by any further consideration of this business,' said Margaret, attempting to take his hand as he followed Lady Walmer out of the room. 'My mind is irrevocably made up. Nothing that can be said or urged would induce me to accept Lord Buckhurst. I have to entreat that Lady Walmer will express to the Duke and Duchess of Grantville how fully I am sensible of their condescension in wishing to accept so obscure a person as myself for their daughter-in-law, but the honour would be thrown away upon me.'

'You have, then, some disgraceful attachment?'—

'No, on my honour!—I have no disgraceful attachment,—no engagement,—no prospect of an engagement. But I do not wish to marry at present.'

And, by some strange inspiration, the truth at that moment flashed across the mind of John Barnsley.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

If the common herd of mankind are apt to mistake reverse of wrong for right, they are not less prone to hail an escape from beggary as opulence. From the moment the people of Stokeshill discovered that Sir Richard Woodgate had not left his grandson destitute, they decided that Sir Henry was in possession of a handsome fortune; and gave utterance to a thought to which their 'wish was father' that he would certainly purchase back the family estates.

The Hawkinses and Abdys took care of course that this

rumour should reach the ears of Barnsley; hinting at the same time that the title had never been clearly made out, and that Sir Henry had only to refund the purchase-money, and be restored to the possession of the property; and, though Barnsley was too good a man of business to entertain the slightest alarm with respect to the title, an impression was left on his mind by the Stokeshill wonder-mongers, that, by some extraordinary means, the Woodgates were once more in possession of a liberal fortune.

When it occurred to him, therefore, that his daughter's repugnance to an alliance with Lord Buckhurst arose from a predilection in favour of Sir Henry Woodgate, to whose conversation with himself he had observed her devote considerable attention the preceding evening, he felt that many worse alternatives might have presented themselves. Mr. Barnsley could not bring himself to believe that Margaret's nature was so altered within a few short months, as to have become unamenable to his authority, and flattered himself she might still be coaxed into consenting to become a duchess; but if not, he made up his mind to look forward, without much anguish of spirit, to her becoming Lady Woodgate. No one could be more sensible than himself of the consequence of the Woodgate family. It had been his dream for forty years; for twenty, his waking contemplation; and, satisfied that Sir Henry would eagerly seize the occasion to repossess himself of the family estates, uniting might and right in the person of his own and Margaret's children,—he determined to make one strong effort in favour of the Duke of Grantville's son; and, in the event of failure, devote his earliest attention to the state of affairs between Margaret and his colleague.

Occasions were not wanting. In defiance of Lady Walmer's implied threats to dethrone Margaret from the eminence of fashion in which she had contributed to place her, Miss Barnsley had engagements over which the Countess exercised no influence, and in which her father could officiate as chaperon. The presence of the beauty of the season was too indispensable to the popularity of a ball, not to be courted at the expense of enduring the addition of so inoffensive a guest as Barnsley; nay, Margaret's fame and fashion was now so fully established, that even a Mrs. Dobbs,

or a Mrs. Closeman, would have been cheerfully accepted as her chaperon.

Chaperons, however, even of the highest grade, were at her disposal. Lady Henry Marston, the great county rival of Lady Walmer, who had long found in Miss Barnsley's charms a popular theme for her exaggerated displays of sensibility, no sooner ascertained from Barnsley's frequent appearance in public with his daughter that some breach had occurred between them and the Countess, than she seized the opportunity of enrolling these county neighbours in Lord Henry's faction, by offers of friendship and protection. The occasion was a tempting one to poor Margaret: she knew that Woodgate was the friend of Lord Henry, and a daily visitor at his house; but the enmity existing between the Walmers and Marstons was equally well known to her; and she was too high-minded to retaliate on the Countess, from whom she had received much kindness, her momentary petulance. It was difficult to escape Lady Henry, who languished every day to Curzon Street with offers of service; while the only way in which Margaret could try to discourage her attempts was the consistent and respectful gratitude with which she uniformly spoke of Lady Walmer.

'Your friends, the Henry Marstons, I find, are beginning to notice the Barnsleys?' observed Lady Walmer to Sir Henry Woodgate, as she turned towards him, one night, at a ministerial party, in order to throw off the leaden weight which George Holloway had been fixing on her shoulders.

'Lady Henry has always admired Miss Barnsley; and Marston has a high opinion of her father,' he replied, with indifference.

'And now the Barnsleys find it convenient to make up to them. Of course, Lady Henry is beginning to discover'——

'Pardon me for interrupting you to remark that I hear from Lady Henry nothing but complaints of the coldness with which her advances to the Barnsleys are received. To make up to any one is so much the most odious species of industry extant, that I cannot too eagerly exonerate Miss Barnsley from the charge. Miss Barnsley has a fine frank character which ought not to be misunderstood.'

Lady Walmer, howbeit, by no means fond of having her assertions controverted, could not help feeling pleased to discover that her suspicions of Margaret, for whom she entertained a sincere regard, were groundless; nor was Margaret less gratified when the Countess, flying towards her with an olive branch the moment she saw an open window in the ark, acquainted her, not only that the waters of strife had subsided, but that it was Sir Henry Woodgate, whose defence of her had reduced them to tranquillity.

'How happy I am!' cried Margaret, when she related to Miss Winston this universal cessation of hostilities. 'We are all friends again! The evil influence of London is so often accused of producing frivolity, and depressing every nobler emotion;—why do we say nothing of its power to soften animosities, and pacify quarrels? People are too busy here to be good haters. Hatred is an inconvenience in London society; it would make the women look ugly, and keep away the men from pleasant dinner-parties. In Kent, for want of better amusement, Lady Walmer would have found it impossible to renounce the petty vengeance she had vowed against me.'

'It is not easy, I should think, to retain rancour against *you*, my dear Margery,' said her friend, always ready to listen, and desirous to drop in a word of counsel when it could be done without officiousness. 'All I have to pray is, that you will not repose too much trust on the friendship of those, whose likings and dislikings are grounded on the shifting sands of caprice.'

'You would have liked Lady Walmer better, then, had she continued her resentment?' said Margaret.

'To own the truth, my dear, I do not like her at all. But it would be absurd for me to pass sentence upon London people, whose conduct is regulated by a code I do not profess to understand. Ah, Margery! I sometimes wish Mr. Barnsley had given you at once to Edward Sullivan, that you might have settled safely and happily in the country, under the protection of a well-principled husband. The tumultuous world in which you are launching wider and wider, fills me with apprehensions.'

'Apprehensions of what?' inquired Margaret, replying with proper gravity to one who spoke so gravely.

'It is my ignorance of *what*, my dear, which causes my uneasiness. My notions of your danger are vague as they are painful. But I cannot feel happy to see you intimately associated with these irresponsible people, who treat vice as a jest, and sorrow as an importunity. Were any affliction to befall you—'

'It is not to them I should turn for consolation!' cried Margaret, embracing her anxious friend. 'I trust I do not allow the trivial influence of society to efface from my mind the duties of life; I am *sure* I shall not suffer it to supersede a friendship, which is more to me than all the glitter and gorgeousness of London.'

'My poor child!' exclaimed Miss Winston, caressingly.

'But, pray do not get into a habit of fancying that all the men I meet are knaves, or all the women fools,' said Margaret.

'So far from it, that I think your Lady Walmer conceals under her mask of triviality a deep, artful nature; and, as to Sir Henry Woodgate, I am not only of opinion that he has a heart, but a very hard one.'

'That your first attempt at pleasantry should be calculated only to give me pain!' cried Margaret, colouring deeply. 'But you are mistaken. Some day or other I will force you to admit that you are mistaken. We are all beginning perfectly to understand each other; we—'

She was interrupted. Her father just then entered the room, in the highest spirits, to announce that, after a most satisfactory explanation with Lady Walmer, who had called him into her carriage in St. James's Street, as he came out of Arthur's, all was once more upon velvet between the families. 'On Thursday, my dear Margaret,' he continued, 'you are to accompany her to the drawing-room; and she insists upon my giving a ball next week, in order—'

'A ball!' interrupted Margaret; 'surely that is very unnecessary. Half the people who invite *us* will feel it a liberty if we invite them in return. It is an effort that will give me no kind of pleasure; nor any one else whom I am anxious to please.'

'Lady Walmer has not only taken it into her head that it is desirable, but undertakes all the trouble for us. She will send out the invitations, and give the necessary orders,'

'She will entertain her friends, in short, in your house, at your expense! Pray, dear papa, do not consent to the plan!' cried Margaret, quite certain that the attempt would expose them to the ridicule of Woodgate, and the impertinence of the Wynnex set.

'My dear, it is already given. By this time, probably, Lady Walmer has engaged many people to come.'

'In that case, we have only to make the best of it,' said Margaret. 'But I have observed that all these kind of attempts bring mortification and disappointment.'

Margaret was not fully aware of the extent of the truth she was asserting. From that day till the one when, according to newspaper announcements, 'Mr. and Miss Barnsley were to open their beautiful mansion in Curzon Street with a splendid entertainment,' she did not enjoy a moment's tranquillity. Lady Walmer, though the project was exclusively her own, kept incessantly announcing that it would prove a failure; and, in her admonitions to the Barnsleys to be very careful in not issuing invitations to friends of their own, or of their own imagining, insisted so strongly on the necessity of pacifying such and such animosities, and substantiating such and such connexions, that Miss Winston began to be of opinion that to form a cabinet, must be a much easier thing than to form a visiting list.

Even Margaret, who had enjoyed the gaieties of the season without thought or care, like a butterfly flitting from rose to lily, from lily to rose, could not help feeling that half her enjoyment of balls and breakfasts was destroyed by her insight into the laborious machinery with which the puppets are set in motion. She had hitherto fancied that these showy pageants were created by a touch of the enchanting wand of fashion; and was shocked to discover how many tiresome notes and cards must be written, how many difficulties obviated, to satisfy the caprice of musicians, confectioners, and nurserymen; that the leader must have double scope for the flourish of his bow, and Gunter a comfortable whereabout for his ice-pails and pitchers. Sick at heart of the very name of ball, it was indeed a relief to escape the fussy documentations of Lady Walmer, mount her favourite Khaled, and accompany her father in his stroll

along the verdant skirts of Kensington Gardens, or the cool shore of the Serpentine.

With them, almost daily, rode Sir Henry Woodgate. Lord Buckhurst was scarcely less assiduous than before, the Duke of Caserta often escorted her. Hundreds of London men, who had formed an acquaintance with Barnsley at the House or his club, in hopes of an introduction to the lovely girl, at whose entrance into Lady Walmer's opera-box the eyes of the whole pit were turned in admiration, joined them in succession; and Parson Drewe, whose professional duties at Tat's invariably carried his knowing cob into the thick of the fashionable throng, could not forbear exclaiming to his swell crew as the Barnsleys rode past:

'Lord! how easily Brummagen counterfeits get into circulation! Gild your brass thick enough, and 'tis soon worth twenty shillings in the pound.'

'Does not Miss Woodgate find her time pass heavily at Ghent, now you are settled in London?' inquired Margaret, one day, when they had extended their ride as far as Richmond Park.

'I think she does,' said Sir Henry, gratified at hearing the fashionable beauty revert to his family affairs; 'I think it, because the lady doth protest too much. Agnes takes such pains to assure me that she is well and happy—never better, never happier—that I am convinced she is getting a little weary of solitude.'

'Why do you not persuade her to settle in England?'

'She has so few connections in England. My mother, her only relative, is fixed for life in the Netherlands.'

'But, in Kent,—near Westerton, for instance,—Miss Woodgate has so many friends who remember her with interest.'

'Kent is forbidden ground,' said Sir Henry, gravely. 'My aunt has too much soul to endure the vicinity of Stokeshill.'

'I am sorry to hear it,' said Margaret, with feeling; 'for *there* lives one who is warmly disposed to admire and respect her.'

'You offer an irresistible encouragement, I admit,' said Woodgate, greatly touched by the cordiality of Miss

Barnsley's tone. 'I thank you for my aunt, and I trust no very great length of time will elapse before she thanks you for herself.'

Margaret dared not venture on the interrogation that presented itself; but after a short pause, Sir Henry resumed:

'Agnes had made up her mind to complete the term for which my grandfather engaged the hotel where they so long resided; but circumstances may possibly induce her—the projects of happiness I have permitted myself to form, and which, if realised, no one will witness with so much satisfaction as herself, may shortly determine her to give up Ghent.'

Margaret's respiration was too much impeded to reply.

'I should, in fact, scarcely know what to make of happiness,' continued Woodgate, after another pause, 'if it were to be enjoyed at a distance from one who has been more than parent to me, more than sister, more than friend! My poor aunt's early days appear to have been darkened by the severity of her family; it belongs to me to repay to her old age the happiness she has lost. The idea of even the happiest marriage would be imperfect, if I did not feel persuaded that the woman who loves me well enough to deign to become my wife, will take part in my feelings of gratitude towards Agnes Woodgate.'

He paused, evidently for an answer; but Margaret had not courage to attempt one.

'Do you think it likely,' said he, turning pointedly towards her, 'for it is a question no one can answer better than yourself), that my wife will be jealous of this old-fashioned attachment of mine?'

'She would be unworthy of your affection if she were so,' said Miss Barnsley.

'I have heard that it is impossible for two women, not sisters, to live on good terms in the same house.'

'I should think it equally impossible to quarrel with an inmate so amiable as Miss Woodgate.'

'You always appear to me to be acquainted with Agnes,' cried Sir Henry. 'No one has ever spoken to me of her with so much interest as yourself.'

'No one, out of her own family, knows her so well. You

forget what opportunities I have had of hearing tributes to her excellence at Stokeshill. After twenty years' absence, she is still beloved in the village as though she left it yesterday.'

'Yet how apt we are to call the poor ungrateful!' cried Woodgate, not understanding how much of this enthusiasm for his family had been assumed with a view to mortify the Barnsleys.

'Since I was at Withamstead with you in the winter,' continued Margaret, 'I have inquired more about the sad history to which the Withamsteads alluded. I believe there never was an instance in which family interference went further to produce misery on one side—on the other, death.'

'You allude to the clergyman to whom Agnes is said to have formed a girlish attachment?' said Sir Henry, relapsing into coldness the moment Stokeshill was mentioned, and drawing up into stiffness at the notion of anything that compromised the dignity of the Woodgates.

'To the clergyman who died of a broken heart soon after your family went abroad.'

'I fancy there was much exaggeration in the statement of the Holloways,' observed Sir Henry; and he took advantage of the departure of Lord Henry Marston, who was riding a short distance behind them with Barnsley, to engage the latter in conversation, by bringing forward the discussion of some political question involving calculations which soon placed the dot-and-carry-one acquirements of the man of business in request.

'If time should ever realise my wild visions,' thought Margaret, as the two members launched together into their millions and tens of millions, 'I must try to root up the upas tree of family pride which poisons his whole character. When he has once brought down his haughty spirit to love *me*—me—he cannot but humanise into a kindlier spirit towards his fellow-creatures. His Woodgateism is the most unchristian-like of passions: but with such powers of mind and such warmth of heart, how easy to make him sensible of the failing!'

Yes! everything appeared easy to her now. She had overcome so many difficulties. The proud man, the cold

man, the harsh man, was all but her declared lover. In whatever society they met, it was to her side he directed his steps; it was her conversation he sought; it was her smile which rejoiced him. He seemed labouring to make himself acquainted with all her sentiments, all her opinions, and when these, as was often the case, were at variance with his own, nothing could exceed the earnest moderation with which he argued with her, and encouraged her to the unreserved development of her powers of mind. Margaret was superlatively happy. If still in some degree uncertain of his attachment, she could not doubt his good opinion, his good will. Young as she was, he respected her: and she felt that he would not have respected her had he entertained disparaging sentiments concerning her father.

CHAPTER XXIX.

'If this troublesome, ill-advised ball were but over,' groaned Margaret to her friend Miss Winston, as she laid aside a note from Lady Walmer—the third she had received that morning from the Countess—informing her that she should visit her in an hour or two, with a certain Lady Catalpa, whose request to be introduced to the Barnsleys and obtain an invitation she had been unable to refuse.

'But pray remember, my dear,' wrote the finessing fine lady, 'that whatever I say or do, you must remain firm to your text that your list is closed, that you have refused hundreds, and cannot send out another card. You must on no account have this Lady Catalpa. She is one of the questionables, whom her late husband's standing in the political world caused to be received in a few ministerial houses, but who must not be seen in one at present so insufficiently established in fashion as your father's.'

'To think,' cried Margaret, throwing the note aside, after having received it back from Miss Winston, 'that any one should find it worth while to descend to manœuvres and humiliations about a ball, to which I would not stoop for an empire.'

'And this Lady Catalpa?' inquired the good woman, who

was even more shocked than Margaret at the lessons of dissimulation her pupil was receiving.

'A woman of infamous character,' cried Miss Barnsley. 'Sir Henry Woodgate assures me he remembers the time when it would have been an insult to pronounce her name in female society; but by dint of adroit manœuvring and prodigious cant, she has edged herself into, not actually the acceptance of society, but a sort of make-believe place, by which she deceives many as to the extent of her influence. No decent woman was ever seen to enter her house, where Lord Shorehan and other young men of his stamp have formed a coterie of a very free-and-easy kind, the members of which are avoided in Lady Walmer's society as if they had escaped from quarantine.'

'And such a woman Lady Walmer is about to introduce *here?*'

'Lady Walmer has not moral courage to hazard the resentment of one who numbers influential votes among her victims, just as I am not brave enough to close my father's doors against them both.'

'Let us take a drive,' said poor Miss Winston, in despair. 'There is surely no occasion for you to remain at home all day because Lady Walmer threatens you with the visit of a woman to whom she desires you to be uncivil?'

'Willingly. We shall escape the noise of the upholsterers, who are taking up the carpets in the drawing-rooms,' said Margaret. 'How lucky that my father should have so much committee business on his hands, and escape all this inconvenience.'

On their return home, however, from a scorching drive in the shadeless Regent's Park, Margaret regretted that she had not stayed at home to face the enemy; for the note of refusal to Lady Catalpa was still to be written, and among the cards of callers during their absence, was that of Sir Henry Woodgate.

'What could he want? Not to excuse himself for to-morrow night, I trust,' thought Margaret, mechanically opening, one after another, a dozen notes of entreaties for cards for the ball; one from a lady who had promised her son, who had promised his cousin, who had promised Captain Currycomb of the Life-Guards, to procure him an

invitation (by way of cavalier to Lady Catalpa); another for Lady Henry Marston, begging leave to bring with her the fiftieth cousin of her pet poet; another from Felicia Holloway, entreating in the behalf of Lady Florinda O'Brallaghan—'a charming young woman, whom we hope shortly to hail by a dearer title'—and so forth through the rest.

'Perhaps he wishes to get some friend invited? But no! he is above interesting himself in such things,' thought Margaret, still pondering over Woodgate's visit.

Her curiosity was still more powerfully excited when, on the morrow, in the midst of a confusion in the fête-giving household, which necessarily caused the door to be closed against morning visitors, she found that he had called again.

'He *must* want to ask for an invitation for some person or other,' cried Margaret; 'how strange that he does not write.' I am half inclined to envelop a blank card to his address. But no! why should I relax from my own dignity by an anticipation of his wishes? If too proud to ask, he must do without it.'

When night approached, however, she regretted her own obduracy, when, on entering the rooms, ornamented with pyramids of exotics, and streaming with floods of light, she saw that the fête would be exquisite. Lady Walmer was considered to excel in the art of ball-giving, and had been quite as exclusive and impertinent, when acting on behalf of the Barnsleys, as on her own. And if, after the temporary room and gauze partitioning—the gardens of geraniums and invisible orchestra—if, after all, the one person, whose presence constituted for Margaret the attraction of the evening, should absent himself, how worse than useless was all this cost and care!

Arrayed in a simple white ball-dress, without a trinket, without a flower, ornamented only by the flush of delight that mantled upon her pure cheek, Margaret stood before her father, prepared for the reception of their guests; and instinctively Miss Winston and Barnsley exchanged looks which expressed, 'Who can wonder that so lovely a creature should command such universal attention?' Both were very happy that night; the poor governess at seeing her child, her pupil, her creation, doing the honours of a noble fête with graceful ease to all that was most distin-

guished in society; and Barnsley in assigning to the exclusive Countess of Walmer the place of honour at his ball, to enable her to welcome her acquaintance to his house with perfect convenience to herself. At every moment, indeed, his gratification increased. Peers, ministers, ambassadors were successively announced; and not even Monsieur Jourdain could have more fervently luxuriated in his debasing aggrandisement.

Margaret was the only one of the family not thoroughly satisfied. The ball was excellent. She would have enjoyed it to her heart's content in the house of any other person; but she felt the degradation of Lady Walmer's patronage in the eminence of the society collected around her. What right had she and her father to be receiving all these dukes and duchesses, these secretaries of state and masters of the rolls? What would Sir Henry Woodgate think of them, if he made his appearance and found them surrounded by lords and ladies whom she scarcely knew by sight? That they were pitiful people, eager to creep out of their own class of society into a caste which contemplated them much as the Wynnex harriers regarded the whipper-in's cropped-eared cur, when it managed to sneak into their aristocratic kennel.

When he *did* arrive, however, no trace of dissatisfaction or displeasure was discernible. Whether agreeably excited by the stirring music of the Coldstream band, which, per favour of little Quickset, played martial airs in the hall between the dances, or delighted by the brilliant *coup d'œil* displayed in the ball-room, certain it was that never had the brow of Woodgate been so beneficently unbent, never his countenance so joyous or his tone so soft, as when he returned the greeting of Margaret and the imperial recognition of Lady Walmer. Barnsley himself did not look happier. He was all gravity, all self-gratulation.

'I'm afraid you won't dance with me to-night,' said he, drawing Margaret a little aside with startling familiarity. '*Do* if you can; I have something to say to you.'

'*Something to say to her!*' Sir Henry Woodgate had something to say to her!—The idol of Stokeshill, Westerton, Brussels, Ghent, and the whole female sex, from Nurse Molyneux to Lady Henry Marston,—he, on whom she had

set her heart, her mind, her hopes, her brilliant destinies,—was probably about to breathe that one word indispensable to sanction her disinterested projects in his favour; that word which she had heard from the noble, the wealthy, the brilliant, and the accomplished, with indifference; that word which she had silenced on the lips of the heir of the Duke of Grantville, and trembled for joy to anticipate from those of the ruined outcast of Stokeshill Place.

'Margaret!—the Duchess of Lancashire looking for a seat! Margaret! the Duke of Caserta offering you an ice! Margaret! Baron Nebuchadnezzar Salfiore asking you to dance!' cried Barnsley, every now and then, in the ear of his bewildered daughter; who was too profoundly absorbed by her own reflections, to take heed of the Jewish Baron or the Neapolitan Duke.

'Margaret,' whispered Miss Winston when, in the course of the evening, she sought out the good woman who, in a corner, secluded from draughts of air, and calculated to conceal from observation the turban and satin dress in which her pupil had insisted on arraying her, sat labouring to keep Lady Withamstead awake,—'Dear Margaret! the sight of your triumphant countenance alarms me! You look *too* happy, child! I tremble for you!'

'I *am* happy—too happy!' replied Margaret, returning the fervent pressure of her hand; but Lady Withamstead's snooze did not appear sufficiently absorbing to admit of acquainting one to whom all her thoughts were open, that Sir Henry at the conclusion of the quadrille they had danced together, had managed to get her away from observation into the temporary conservatory, and place a letter in her hand, which was now concealed in her bosom.

'When you have perused it,' was his accompanying whisper, 'you will guess how often, how very often, I have longed to confide to you the declaration it contains. I called yesterday for that purpose, hoping to find you alone,—again to-day. For a time, indeed, the broken conditions of my fortunes forbade me to aspire to a happiness, as much above my pretensions as my hopes. But an unlooked-for accession of income at length affords me the hope of accelerating an event, on which depends the happiness or wretchedness of my future life.'

'Vot beautiful flowersh, Meesh Barnsley,' interrupted Baron Nebuchadnezzar, who stood near them unobserved in the conservatory; 'oranches and lemonsh, in ploom I declare! Vere do you puy theshe handsome treeshe? or do you hire them for the day at a per shentage?'

'I am sorry I cannot inform you; Lady Walmer is mistress of the ceremonies here to-night,' said Margaret.

'Aha! Lady Valmer! Den they are bought and paid for drou de noshe!' cried Baron Nebuchadnezzar. 'Vor my fader's pall vot he cave do de allied shovereignsh at Vienna, a forrests of oranches and lemonsh vas hired, von vid de oder, not mosh abofe den guineash de outset.'

When Margaret could disengage her attention from the premier Baron of Jewry, Woodgate was gone, departed, vanished like a dream. But eagerly as she longed to vanish, also, and dearly as she knew her future fate to be involved in the contents of the letter she had slipped within the foldings of her dress, she was forced to smile, to play the courteous hostess, to feel honoured by the opportunity of treading on the gouty toe of Lord Evergreen, or commiserate the horrors of Lady Henry Marston who 'felt convinced, nay, pretty nearly sure, that there was noyeau in the ice, of which she had swallowed half a spoonful,—noyeau, which every homœopathist eschews as prussic acid!'

Unluckily, too, the ball was brilliantly successful. If every one had wanted to come, no one wanted to go away. Waltz succeeded to quadrille, quadrille to waltz; and the galoppe intervening, only imparted fresh spirit to the dancers for more waltzes, more quadrilles. A few of the very few elderly chaperons tolerated by Lady Walmer, sat nodding in different corners, pretending to keep time to the orchestra, which they accompanied with the running bass of a gentle snore. When the eternal cotillon struck up, daylight peeped in at the windows, and the yawning servants at the doors, as if to hint that, as there is a time for all things, for all things there should also be an end.

'This, I hope, is the last dance?' inquired Barnsley of Margaret, as he passed behind her in the circle; and his daughter, turning round, could not help perceiving that her father looked exceedingly weary of his company, considering how many magnificent individuals it still comprehended.

'Yes, papa, the *cotillon* is always the last dance, but it generally lasts long. The other night, at Lady Henry's, more than an hour!'

'Couldn't you contrive to shorten it, my dear? I want so deucedly to get away!'

So did Margaret; yet she could suggest nothing but patience. The Duke of Caserta was leading the *cotillon* with Jessie Devereux; it was impossible to interfere with the lengthiness of the ridiculous figures they amused themselves by perpetrating.

'I dare say it will not last above half-an-hour longer,' said Margaret to her father; 'after which, they will go into the refreshment-room for five minutes, and away, as quick as their carriages can come up.'

'Lady Walmer is not gone, is she?'

'No, papa; the pink feathers you see waving yonder in the conservatory are in Lady Walmer's hat.'

'In that case, I really think I may leave you.'

'Certainly, if you are so much tired. You can get away by the back stairs.'

'My dear, I am not going to bed. I have a post-chaise waiting for me at the corner of Stanhope Street. I am going out of town on urgent business. Hush! not a word! take no notice, and I'm off.'

And Barnsley glided out of the room.

'Out of town on urgent business! Whither? To Westerton? To Stokeshill? On business perhaps connected with, or connecting him with Woodgate? Yet she was debarred of all opportunity of even hinting to her father of the state of affairs between herself and Sir Henry! Oh, the tune of that tiresome cotillon!—when would its monotonous sing-song drone itself into silence? One by one, the couples stole off to the cloak-room. The circle was reduced from thirty couples to thirteen; but those thirteen seemed possessed by the spell of the seven dancing Princesses in the story! There was a degree of energy in their waltz, of indefatigability in their *pas-de-bourrées*, which wound up Margaret's impatience to the uttermost. She saw clearly there was no getting rid of them. Little Quickset of the Guards was dancing with a Welsh heiress; Baron Nebuchadnezzar with a rich widow, whom he was trying to cajole into a constituent of

the house of Salfiore, Manasses, Levi, and Co.; and Margaret, amid all her vexations, was not a little amused to hear him reciting to his partner, 'Vot a vonderful fall dere had been in Spanish! a vasht many smashes in de shity.'

At length, satin pelerines were called for, and cloth shoes. Coachmen, as fast asleep as Lady Withamstead, were roused upon their boxes. Every one departed or was on the point of going; and a very low 'Thank heaven!' burst from the lips of the young hostess. With some difficulty, she found a civil word to answer to the facetious last good night of the little ensign, who was blocking up the doorway in an attitude and preventing the exit of the fiddlers with their green bags.

'Where is Mr. Barnsley?' inquired Miss Winston, no longer able to repress the tendency to a gaping fit induced by seven hours of small talk, from ten at night till five in the morning.

'Gone out of town!' said Margaret, thinking only of her letter, as she mechanically accepted from the hand of Lawton the lighted bed-room candle, to which increasing daylight bade a laughing defiance.

'*Out of town!*' ejaculated Miss Winston, aghast. 'My dear, you must be dreaming!'

'No wonder, for I am almost asleep,' said Margaret, hobbling wearily up stairs, closely followed by the governess. 'But he *is* gone;—to Westerton, I fancy. I had not time to ask him where.'

'Surely it was a most extraordinary freak?' demanded Miss Winston, roused up in proportion as her young companion seemed growing sleepy. 'To leave his company, his friends—'

'Lady Walmer's friends,' corrected Margaret.

'At all events, the persons Mr. Barnsley was entertaining;—and to go no one knows whither, no one knows why—'

'I should have known both, had I been able to catch what he said while the *cotillon* was hurrying on, and that horrible *cornet-à-piston* shaking the walls of the house. At all events, we shall learn to-morrow, or to-day I ought to call it. Good morning, dearest friend. A kiss at parting on the happiest day of my life!'

'And after the weariest night,' added Miss Winston, tenderly embracing her at the door of her room. 'Do not dawdle, dear Margery,—don't curl your hair. I am afraid you will be sadly apt to take cold.'

Margaret at present took nothing, but the letter out of her bosom. The door was already locked—the maid not yet rung for. If she had not time to examine Sir Henry's epistle, she might at least run her delighted eye over the contents; and, throwing herself into her great chair, she tore open the envelope. What was her mortification to perceive that the letter she had been wearing next her heart was *not* from Sir Henry at all! It was in the handwriting of Helen Sullivan! There must be some mistake. He must have given her the wrong letter; for if her eyes were deceiving her, her ears certainly had not. There was no mistaking the meaning of Woodgate's pointed appeal to her feelings.

The perusal of the letter would unravel the mystery. With aching eyes, accordingly, and a throbbing heart, Margaret read as follows:—

'Had you not quitted our house so precipitately, my dearest Margaret, the other day on my cousin Buckhurst's arrival, I was about to claim your congratulations on an event in which I feel sure that none of my friends will sympathise more warmly than yourself. My poor dear mother, sensible of her approaching end, has at length given her consent to my marriage with Sir Henry Woodgate; to whom (as you have probably long suspected) my affections have been pledged for years. The reluctance of my family to see me form an alliance less brilliant on the score of fortune than they might desire, has lately been obviated; and, as Sir Henry consents to remain the inmate of my mother so long as her life is spared, all objections are at an end. In September (when six months after my father's death will have elapsed,) I shall entreat, under a new name, the continuance of your friendship.

'I am afraid, my dear Margaret, that poor Woodgate's desire to pass the moments of our separation in the society of those who could sympathise in his affection for me, has caused him to appear importunate. He says you have borne

with him like an angel; and that although the temptation of an opportunity to talk about "Helen" has caused him to inflict his company without mercy, you have pardoned his tediousness in favour of his partiality to your friend. Eager to thank you for this goodness, Sir Henry insists that I shall lose no further time in acquainting you with our engagement, and making an appeal to your future friendship in favour of both.

'My mother begs me to offer her best regards. Poor Edward is at Baden with the Drewes.

'Ever, dearest Margaret,

'Affectionately yours,

'H. S.'

Having reached the last syllable of this overwhelming communication, Margaret sat many minutes motionless, without the power of thought or action. Her first idea was to misdoubt the evidence of her senses, and recommence the perusal of the letter. She fancied her powers of mind were affected,—she read her eand there a word;—her thoughts became perplexed;—she raised her hand to the forehead on which a cold dew was rising,—she placed it on her heart, of which the throbbing palpitation had changed to a deadly torpor. *There* all was still; while in her poor perplexed brain, a thousand struggling thoughts were contending for mastery.

He was lost to her then,—or rather, he had never been *hers*—had never loved her—never entertained a thought of raising her to his bosom as a wife. He had borne with her and her father, to talk to them of the object of his affections—the object to whom he was about to devote his life. Having now obtained the sanction of the Sullivans, to *them* he would be nothing further, perhaps enter their doors no more, perhaps resume his detestation of them as the owners of Stokeshill.

In that first moment of anguish, Margaret felt that she had not strength to endure all this. Her confidence had been too sanguine, her disappointment was proportionably bitter. Not only she must resign her prospects of happiness, but see the manly affections of Sir Henry Woodgate concentred in another! Her very soul seemed sinking

within her; the world was disappearing from her view. Had she not clung to the chair which appeared to be rocking beneath her, she must have fallen senseless on the floor.

At length she recovered strength to snatch a glass of water, which for a moment revived her; and, at that moment, the voice of Gladstone was heard at the door begging she might be admitted to undress her young lady. Expose herself to observation in her present state of bewilderment, she would not; and, having desired Gladstone to go to bed, as she had already undressed herself, and was lying down, Margaret returned to the re-perusal of Helen Sullivan's letter. She was now able to deliberate upon all its terms and expressions. She now noticed that it was by Sir Henry's desire this tardy intelligence of their attachment was conveyed. Sir Henry wished her to know that he was an engaged man. Sir Henry wished to prevent the possibility of her forming plans for his entanglement—no! not the *possibility* of her forming them: he had seen all, he knew all, he felt that she loved him, he saw that she wanted him to marry her: that the Barnsleys of Stokeshill wished to sanctify their usurpation by an alliance with the Woodgates; and seeing all this, he had thought fit to warn them of his pre-engagement!

What a stroke for the high-mindedness of Margaret Barnsley! The stagnant blood now coursed again like lightning through her veins. The chill of her shivering frame thrilled with the excitement of fever. 'I shall go mad!' she exclaimed, pressing her hand frantically to her burning head. 'And I must not go mad, or I shall betray myself! I shall degrade myself—I shall tell all! Everyone will learn that I love a man who despises me; that I have been rejected—admonished! No—oh, no! I must not go mad! Merciful Heaven, preserve me in my right senses!'

She leaned back in her chair, revolving and re-revolving everything that had passed; every word she had uttered to Woodgate, every word heard from his lips—from the first moments of their acquaintance; and absorbed by these contemplations, the minutes—the hours wore on. London awoke with its tumults. While a single overwhelming idea possessed the soul of Margaret, the thousand perplexities of life set the world around her again in movement.

At length, Miss Winston, disturbed in her rest by a fear that Margaret had over-exerted herself the preceding night, and might suffer from her efforts, came gently to her chamber door; and alarmed by the unusual circumstance of finding it locked, called in a low voice upon her pupil's name.

To refuse admittance to that best of friends was impossible. Margaret gently undid the bolt; and the consternation of the poor woman, who was in her dressing-gown, on finding Margaret, at almost noon-day, still arrayed in her satin and blonde of the preceding night, took from her the power of utterance. A second glance revealed the haggard looks, the horror-struck expression of Margaret's eyes, and the leaden hue produced by stagnation of blood. Miss Winston saw that something terrible had happened; and reverting to Barnsley's mysterious departure the preceding night, could only find strength to falter out:

'My dear Margaret, your father?'—

The smile with which Margaret strove to reassure her friend's apprehensions on that head was a piteous effort. But conscious of the impossibility of detailing what had passed, she contented herself with placing in the hands of Miss Winston the letter of Helen Sullivan; fixing her eager eyes on her countenance as she read, and trying to imbibe the spontaneous demonstration of a sympathy, which, precious as it was, she had not courage to hear audibly expressed.

More calm of soul than Margaret, a single perusal enabled Miss Winston to comprehend the full purport of the communication; nay, to appreciate, in its utmost force, the terrible anguish it must have inflicted. Instead of masking her words in common-place consolation, she folded Margaret fervently in her arms—her young, faultless, sorrowful Margaret; wept over her in silence, as a mother yearning over her child; and, aware of the especial bent of her pupil's character, contented herself with whispering:

'Margaret, you must not forget your father!'

A start from the exhausted frame she was embracing, convinced her that the exhortation had struck home. Not a word more passed between them. Margaret suffered her friend to undress her, arrange her night-clothes, assist her

into bed, draw the curtains closely round, and station herself in a chair by the bedside, as she had been accustomed to do during the poor girl's illness at Wynnex. Margaret's troublels, however, were greater now; a heavier dispensation was upon her, and, extending her hand in search of the motherly hand to which she owed so much, she placed her cheek upon it, and, like a suffering infant, moaned herself to sleep.

That such a state should be called sleep!—a state of such perturbation—such agony; when, as her will and reason became subjected to the perplexities of dreams, she fancied Woodgate was presenting Helen to her, arrayed in her bridal dress; that Edward Sullivan was triumphing over her despair; that Lady Walmer, Lord Shoreham, the Hollowways, all her acquaintance, were deriding her with taunts and mockeries. Every now and then she started up to shake off these painful delusions. But the extreme fatigue of the two preceding days was happily too much for her; and having been soothed again upon her pillow by her companion, she sank at length into that heavy slumber which beneficent nature seems to have reserved for the overwrought sensibilities of the afflicted.

CHAPTER XXX.

Miss Winston rejoiced that Mr. Barnsley's absence from town rendered it unnecessary for Margaret to rise that day. Her young friend's room was luckily at the back of the house, and in some degree removed from the disturbance of the hundreds of knocks at the door, which, on the day following an entertainment in London, announce the grateful visits of the entertained. The upholsterers, who were to set the house in order, were requested to defer their exertions till the following morning; and, when Lady Walmer forced her way in, to congratulate the Barnsleys on the eminent success of their ball, and canvass for their grateful acknowledgments, Miss Winston hurried down to meet her, with information that Margaret was so extremely fatigued, that she had sentenced her to two days' complete repose.

'Quite right, my dear Madam,—quite right!' cried the Countess, who with engagements innumerable upon her hands, had had enough of the Barnsleys for the present; more particularly as the publicity of her late extraordinary exertions in their favour, had brought her in all directions reports of the insignificance which rendered them unworthy so vast a stretch of condescension. And away she flew—a superannuated butterfly, fluttering among overblown roses.

Late in the evening, Margaret awoke, and would have risen to dress, had not Miss Winston persuaded her to prolong her rest. A few hours afterwards, however, she started up again, reminding the kind friend who had scarcely left the room, that Miss Sullivan's letter demanded some acknowledgment.

'Bring me my desk,' said she, 'I must write and congratulate her, or they may think I was too ill to hold a pen.'

'To-morrow, my dear,' remonstrated Miss Winston. 'You will be calmer to-morrow; you cannot write to-night.'

'Indeed I can—indeed I *must!*' cried Margaret, attempting to rise. 'They shall not fancy me too much overpowered to attend to common courtesies of life. Pray let me write!'

To pacify her agitation, Miss Winston at length consented: and after half-a-dozen illegible attempts (how different from Margaret's usually decided handwriting and perspicuous style!) she completed a note, which Miss Winston assured her was not calculated to excite suspicion.

'Accept my thanks for your letter, and sincere congratulations, dear Helen,' she wrote. 'When we meet again, I shall express to you more fully than the limits of a letter will permit, my heartfelt wishes for your happiness, and that of Sir Henry Woodgate.'

And when, after the completion of this, Margaret let fall her pen, what a world of visionary happiness faded from her view! What disenchantment was over-mastering her spirit! What a knell was sounding in her ear! At length, in a faint voice, she entreated her friend to deliver the note to the servants, who were still up expecting her father's return from the country, that it might be dispatched early in the morning.

In compliance with this request, Miss Winston went down into the dismantled drawing-room, to ring for Lawton; and, while still standing there, the light of her solitary taper bringing miserably to view the withered garlands and scattered moss of the preceding night, she was startled by Barnsley's voice on the stairs; and, in another moment, pale, abrupt, and discomposed, her patron stood beside her.

'Where's Margaret?' cried he, surprised that the driving of his chaise to the door had not brought down his daughter to receive him.

'She is in bed, Sir.'

'Already? Why 'tis scarcely twelve o'clock. Fatigued, I suppose, by that cursed ball?'

'Not only fatigued, but ill, Sir,' said Miss Winston, with a degree of gravity intended to recall him to decorum.

'Ill?—why she was well enough last night!'

'Miss Barnsley has been feverish all day; she has probably caught cold.'

'Not she!—I see how it is,—the report has reached her.'

'It has indeed, Sir!' replied Miss Winston, surprised to find him allude so explicitly to the subject.

'Why it can't be public, yet? Till the thing was hinted to me last night by Sir Henry Woodgate, I swear I never had the most remote conjecture.'

'Nor Margaret.'

'How should she—Who was likely to talk to *her* on such a subject? Who broke the thing to her at last?—Sir Henry?'

'Miss Sullivan herself, Sir; but probably at Sir Henry's request.'

'Ah, ah—ready enough to speak when it was too late,—close enough while the mischief might have been averted.'

'Sir Henry may not have been altogether aware of its extent.'

'He might have asked, then. I am sure he was here often enough. For the last month, we have seen him every day.'

'Most unfortunately, as things have turned out; for, till lately, poor girl, the impression upon her feelings cannot have been very profound.'

'Impression upon whose feelings?'

'Margaret's.'

'Impression about what? She never seemed to me to care for money; I have often reproached her with her indifference to everything approaching to business.'

'Business!' said the amazed Miss Winston. 'You do not imagine that after refusing Lord Buckhurst and Sir William Ross, Margaret regrets Sir Henry Woodgate in a pecuniary point of view?'

'Regret Sir Henry Woodgate!' reiterated Barnsley, amazed in his turn. 'Surely she don't think he was fighting shy of us, in his warning to me?—Surely she's not fretting about *that?*'

'Her illness is unquestionably occasioned by the announcement of Sir Henry's marriage with Miss Sullivan.'

'His marriage! D——n his marriage! The loss of seven thousand pounds needn't prevent my daughter making as good a match as with Sir Henry Woodgate.'

'Not if Margaret's feelings were equally engaged,' said Miss Winston, shocked at Mr. Barnsley's unusual tone of excitement, and ignorant by what circumstance his temper had been so powerfully disturbed.

'Feeling—feelings!' cried he. 'This is no moment for the indulgence of sentiment. That rascal Closeman has failed for a hundred and fifty thousand pounds;—gone—smashed—absconded; and I'm a loser by him to the amount of seven thousand pounds.'

'I am concerned to hear it, Sir,' said Miss Winston, calmly; regarding the misfortune as very secondary to the blow which had been struck upon Margaret's gentle nature.

'Just now, too; after that cursed election had drained me of six thousand,—and this season in town has run me so close! Upon my soul, I don't know how to face it.'

'With prudence and economy,' Miss Winston began.

'Prudence and economy, indeed. A mighty pleasant prospect! Just as I am anxious to settle my daughter brilliantly in life, a plausible rascal takes me in, picks my pocket, runs off with my property,—and leaves me to the enjoyment of prudence and economy!'

'Mr. Closeman's failure must have been productive of great distress in Westerton,' observed Miss Winston. 'The lower classes had so much confidence in him.'

'Yes, but show me one of them who had seven thousand pounds in his hands!'

'Their losses fall proportionably heavy on their small means. The shutting up of the house will, I fear, be the ruin of many.'

'Yes! there's some comfort in that. Hawkins of Longlands, I fancy, is done up; and Timmins has lost fifteen hundred pounds. Those fellows will be brought down a peg or two!'

'Is there no hope of recovering any part of the money?' demanded Miss Winston, compassionately.

'None in the world. But just let Closeman show his nose in Kent, just let me catch the fellow!—So specious as he was when he got that money of mine into his hands! Harpenden, myself, Wright the tallow-chandler, and two other of the largest creditors, have entered into an agreement not to sign his certificate, and Wright, I fancy, will be one of the assignees.'

'Poor man!—I mean poor Mr. Closeman,'—said Miss Winston, perceiving by her patron's wondering face that he knew not to what to attribute her compassion for the assignee.

'*Poor!*' cried Barnsley, almost furious. 'A man who has taken in half the county—a man who has been living in luxury for the last twenty years on the reputation of a fortune he never possessed!—A man who was thought as safe as the bank! I vow to heaven when Sir Henry Woodgate first began to hint last night, in friendly confidence, that if I had anything considerable in Closeman's hands, I had better look to it, I felt as angry as if he had attacked the solvability of my brother Clement!—Woodgate was actually obliged to speak plain, and explain the why and wherefore of his misgivings, before I could make up my mind to set off for Westerton, and see how matters were going on. I was there by nine,—Closeman's usual hour of opening. I should have been in time to get out the money if—if—' he paused.

'Indeed,' said Miss Winston, fancying he was waiting for an answer.

'If he had opened at all!' continued Barnsley; 'but it was already a settled thing. The doors closed an hour earlier than usual last night. It was perfectly understood in the

town that the game was up. As I drove over the bridge, I saw by the way people were assembled all over the town in scattered groups, that something was amiss. Never beheld such confusion!—never witnessed such a sensation!—Poor Hill (Harpenden's partner) was obliged to be bled, he was so cut up.'

'Did you happen to hear, sir, whether my friends the Dobbses were losers to any amount?'

No! I never happen to hear anything about the Dobbses,—nor do I wish it—' said Barnsley, sharply. 'Between elections and one thing or other, I've had enough of them; pray is Margaret asleep?'

'She was not, when I came down, sir!'

'I shall step up and see her then. But if she is ill, perhaps I had better avoid all mention of the cause of my leaving town.—The shock might be too much for her.'

'I wish I thought her in a state to be influenced by anything of the kind!'—said Miss Winston, with perfect sincerity.

'You fancy she will see nothing to regret in the loss of seven thousand pounds!—Then let me tell you, nature has given her an understanding, and *I* an education, to very little purpose.'

'Nature has endowed her with *a heart* which, I suspect, is more influential than either,' said the governess. 'But perhaps, sir, you will walk up and communicate this unfortunate intelligence?—If any thing can rouse my poor child, it will be tidings of an event that involves the welfare of her father.'

But now that Barnsley was *invited* to fulfil his own intentions, his views were altered. 'If Margaret was ill, she had better not be disturbed; and, as he was himself amazingly fatigued, he should go to bed.'

Not an inquiry concerning the *cause* of her indisposition,—not a surmise respecting Miss Winston's allusions to Sir Henry Woodgate. His parental mind was engrossed by the denunciations of Harpenden and Hill which still sounded in his ears. 'A regular smash!—they won't pay eighteenpence in the pound!'

Next morning, Margaret was stirring at an unusually early hour. Having thrown off the numbness produced by exces-

sive fatigue, her intelligent mind became alive to the ignominy of allowing herself to bend under the blow she had received.

'Do not be afraid of me,' said she, when returning the affectionate morning salutation of Miss Winston. 'I am not going to discredit you,—I am not going to discredit myself, or suffer the world to guess the extent of my disappointment. I shall not indulge in the soft sorrows of a disappointed young lady,' she continued, attempting a wretched smile. 'I am quite myself!—I promise never to breathe the name of Sir Henry Woodgate to you again.'

'Do not promise me *that*, or I shall know that you intend to brood over your afflictions,' observed her wiser friend. 'Talk to me of him freely; confront with courage all that is past, and all that is to come; and, by this fair discussion, you will not suffer the business to obtain undue influence over your mind. It is the undivulged sorrow we foster in the depths of our heart, which expands from a weakling into a giant.'

Miss Winston now acquainted her with her father's loss. Margaret made no comment; and the governess thought it just to direct her sensibilities to his misfortune, by observing that, coming after the vast expenses of his election and season in London, it would produce a serious reduction in his income. Still, Margaret shrugged her shoulders and said nothing. Reared in the lap of luxury,—her very whims provided for, by Barnsley's conscientious liberality towards 'Mary's daughter,' she knew not the meaning of privation. It was impossible for her to appreciate the value of money.

'This bankruptcy of Closeman will prove a serious calamity in the neighbourhood of Westerton,' persisted Miss Winston, shocked at her indifference. 'A country bank is the depository of all the little savings of the poor. Many a grey head is this day covered with ashes by the event. The people in the village—'

'True!'—interrupted Margaret, seizing the idea. 'Many will lose their all,—many will be ruined,—many will be driven out of their farms and houses!—Poor, poor Stokeshill!—always fated to misfortune,—always under a cloud!'

At that moment, Barnsley, who since he had been in parliament had made a sort of business-levee of his breakfast-

table and breakfasted in the study, leaving Margaret to take her morning meal in her own room, hastened in, to inquire after her—hat on head and stick in hand,—previously to setting forth for his club.

'Good morning, my dear; I hope you're better to-day?—Overdone, I suspect, by that cursed ball!—You stood in a draught the whole evening. You look pale, still, Margaret. If you're not quite the thing this evening, I shall send for Pennington.'

'Thank you, papa;—I am still a little tired, I shall be quite well to-morrow. I mean to go to the opera to-night with Lady Walmer.'

'Right!—stick to Lady Walmer.—After all, Lady Walmer's the best look-out for you. I see they're beginning to clear away the trash down stairs, and make the house habitable again. Everything will be quiet and comfortable, I hope, by dinner-time. I've had persons with me on business; and the people laying down the carpets in the drawing-room kept up such a devil of a noise, that we could not hear ourselves speak.'

'I believe it is almost over,' said Margaret, to whose spectral appearance her father seemed wholly insensible. 'I am sorry to hear you have had business of so disagreeable a nature upon your hands.'

'Disagreeable?—I believe you;—*Seven thousand pounds* gone like a puff of wind! *Seven thousand!*—There ought to be a law in this commercial country making bankruptcy amenable to the criminal law. A year or two in Newgate would be a lesson to the gentry, who are now allowed to pick one's pocket with impunity!'

He was interrupted. Mrs. Gladstone made her appearance with 'a letter for my master,' which the butler had requested her to bring up, as it was superscribed 'immediate,' and Barnsley, tucking his stick under his arm with his usual dispatch-of-business gesture, tore it open and ran his eye over the contents. Apparently, their nature was important; for snatching off his hat, as if the incumbrance impeded his comprehension, and flinging it on a sofa, and himself on a chair, he addressed himself to the reperusal of the letter.

Margaret, who was now alone with her father, not wishing to disturb a study which seemed of so absorbing a nature,

sat quietly down with her eyes fixed upon his face; and great was her amazement to perceive that at the close of his second reading, the open letter fell from her father's hands. Barnsley's teeth were set,—his hands clenched,—his face ghastly.

'My dear, dear father!' cried Margaret flying towards and hanging over him. 'What has happened? What *can* be the matter?'

Instead of answering, Barnsley gazed with glassy eyes into her face.

'Speak, dear, dear father!' she cried, seizing his hands in hers. 'Are you ill?'

'*Ruined!*' faltered Barnsley, in a scarcely recognisable tone.—'Read!'

And, having raised the letter from the ground, Margaret read rapidly as follows:

'Sir,

'As solicitors for the Estate of Messrs. Closeman and Co., I am under the extremely painful necessity of informing you (for partner and self) that upon examination of the deeds and deposits of the house, the terms of investment of 7,000*l.* made by yourself on the 5th of December, ult., appear to constitute you a partner in the house. I have submitted the same to Messrs. Harpenden and Hill, whom I understand to be your legal advisers, and who admit the validity of the plea. I ran up to town yesterday for the purpose of taking counsel's opinion; which I herewith enclose you, as well as a copy of your agreement respecting six per cent. interest as your share of the balance profits of the house.

'I regret extremely; therefore, to be under the necessity of informing you that your name is included in the act of bankruptcy now drawing out; and the surrender of property, &c. &c. will take place on the 20th inst.

'Waiting your immediate instructions,

'I have the honour to be, dear sir,

'With much respect (for partner and self),

'Your very obedient humble servant,

'Rich. Dobbs, Jun.

10, New Square, Lincoln's Inn.

Margaret scarcely dared turn her eyes towards her father.

'Not a guinea left in the world!—Ruin and starvation staring us in the face!'—burst at length from his livid lips.

'My dear father!' faltered Margaret,—'compose yourself!—things may turn out better than you expect.'

'*How?*—Show me *how?*—What do *you* know of business?—Why should you think yourself wiser than all the world—*Everything* must go to the creditors. I have nothing but the coat on my back I can call my own!'

'You have your daughter!' cried she, involuntarily throwing herself on her knees, and flinging her arms around him,—'your daughter who will abide by you—your daughter who will work for you—your daughter who will comfort you!'

'You know not what you promise, child!' cried Barnsley, smiting his brows like a madman. 'You, who have wanted for nothing all your life, cannot guess what it is to want bread. Beggared as we are, you will be avoided by your friends—shunned by the world.'

'We shall be shunned by none whose regard is worth preserving,' answered Margaret, grieved at the inaccessibility of that stubborn heart.

'You talk like a fool, Margaret!' cried Barnsley. 'You will be enlightened to your cost, when you find we have been only endured in society while raised by money to its level! Henceforth we shall be cast forth like dogs!'

Margaret's heart was sinking. She perceived the utter insufficiency of her affection to impart happiness to her father; and of all the misfortunes that had befallen her within the last two days, *that* struck deepest!

'All is over for me, then!' she exclaimed, when Barnsley, having snatched his hat, rushed out of the room, resolved to hurry to Lincoln's Inn, and ascertain from the best advice whether his case was hopeless. 'No one loves me,—my love is necessary to no one! But two days ago, rejoicing in the wantonness of perfect happiness: and *now* sunk in poverty, disgrace, despair!'

A flood of tears came to her relief; and, with tears, the human heart invariably softens. Another quarter of an hour brought before her a new view of her position. The filial devotion she had contemplated as a pleasure, became henceforward a duty. 'He may repel my advances, may refuse my offers,' she murmured, while reflecting upon the harsh-

ness of her father. 'But who else will bear with him? No—no! a time must come when I shall be necessary to him. Hitherto, my existence has been a dream; my life is now beginning!—'

A low moan of sympathy startled her from her reverie, as poor Miss Winston, her countenance paralysed with horror, approached with extended arms.

'My dear child!'—faltered the good woman, clasping her fervently to her breast.

'Thank heaven!' cried Margaret Barnsley, returning that kindly pressure: 'thank heaven, in all my adversity, I have yet a friend!'

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was late in the evening when Barnsley returned; his lips parched, his eyes hollow, his voice hoarse, as though within the last twelve hours years had passed over his head. Anxious as he knew poor Margaret and the governess to be, touching the result of his errand, he would not, unquestioned, impart a single word of information; and, from the doggedness of his silence, the two sorrowing women naturally inferred the worst.

'You take things coolly, Margaret!' said he, at last, harshly misinterpreting the motives of her forbearance. 'It seems a matter of indifference to you that we should for the future depend on public charity for our support.'

'God forbid!' involuntarily exclaimed the heart-broken girl. 'I feel the hopelessness of our situation too severely, father, to harass you with questions.'

'Had you ever chosen to give a moment's attention to business, you might know that our case *could* not be altogether hopeless.'

'Indeed!' cried Miss Barnsley, with an unbrightened countenance, but careful not to remind him that (only a few hours before) he had himself announced his ruin to be irretrievable.

'Had you reflected, you might have remembered that Stokeshill being settled upon yourself, could never become available to my creditors. My personalty must go!—

Instead of failing for one hundred and fifty thousand pounds, that plausible, grinning rascal at Westerton fails for twenty-five; *one hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds* of your unfortunate father's property being made answerable for his villany.'

'A hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds!—a fortune for a prince!' murmured Miss Winston.

'The hard earnings of your two grandfathers!' persisted Barnsley, addressing his daughter, and careful not to specify how small a share was attributable to his own inheritance. 'Oh, heavens! if old Trannis could have lived to see this day—could have dreamed of his fine property being dissipated by my folly,—my wretched, self-seeking folly!'

'*You*, at least, have only to tax yourself with a too generous confidence in the probity of others,' said Margaret.

'No such thing!' cried Barnsley, excited out of his usual prudent reserve. 'I have to tax myself with the cursed avarice which could not content itself with ordinary gains. I must needs grasp more than my due. I must needs insist on usurious interest; and on my own handwriting the law will condemn me!—I—I—the most experienced man of business in Kent,—I, so scrupulous in transacting the affairs of others,—actually to put my name to a paper I was too indolent to read. No, not indolent. I remember well how the thing occurred. I was so excited by having just heard of the establishment of those Wynnex hounds, that I should have signed the master-roll of a high-treason conspiracy without heeding. Yes, I have to thank that fellow Alfred Drewe—I have to thank Lord Shoreham for all that has befallen me!'

'You were not aware, then, in giving your signature, that the paper involved you in partnership with the house?'

'Not in the slightest degree—not in the remotest. I thought it a formal receipt,—I read the amount,—I cast my eye on the figures of the rate of interest; but beyond I knew and guessed nothing. How could I suppose that it was assigned me, on the plea of a pretended partnership, a share of the profits of the house?'

'But Stokeshill must be a valuable property.'

'Valuable as a residence to a man of six or eight thousand a year. But what does it return?'

This was a question his companions were not exactly prepared to answer.

'Surely,' said Margaret mildly, 'by reducing our establishment, and living with the strictest prudence, we might still——'

'Pshaw!' cried her father. 'Live without a guinea in my pocket at that expensive place? See how old Woodgate got on under similar circumstances. The sheriff's officers never off his premises!'

Margaret sighed deeply.

'Then I fear it must be let?' said she, looking interrogatingly at her father.

'*Let!*' ejaculated Barnsley, pausing in his hasty pacing of the study, in which they were sitting. 'Who is to hire it, completely dismantled as it will be?'

'Dismantled?'

'Why do you echo my words? I know what I say,—I know what I mean. The estate is secured to yourself by a settlement, of which Winchmore (your grandfather's partner) and my brother-in-law, James Heaphy, were trustees. But the furniture,—the fixtures,—the stock — are mere personalty—will be sold for the benefit of the creditors; and what means have we of buying them in?'

'Sold!' ejaculated Margaret, neglecting, in the humiliation of that announcement, her father's recent prohibition against such reiterations. 'Poor Stokeshill!'

'Yes! you think more of losing a few favourite gew-gaws, than of your father's ruin.'

Margaret had too much command of temper to vindicate herself from so unjust an aspersion.

'To-morrow, you may go down and take leave of them all!' said Barnsley. 'To-morrow, you may go down and afford all the worthies with whom we are so popular fresh opportunity of insulting us. To-morrow, you may gratify yourself by listening to their exultation that Closeman pays seventeen shillings in the pound, and that John Barnsley and his family are beggars! Mr. Richard Dobbs sent them the news by express. No doubt they set the bells of St. John's ringing when it reached them!'

'But you will not send me away from you at such a moment?' faltered Margaret with quivering lips.

'Do you want to remain here, and add to my misery by exposing yourself to the blockheads who are coming to put seals on your father's property?—Do you wish to be asked for your trinkets,—your keys,—your purse?'

'I wish to do nothing, dear father, that may embarrass you,' remonstrated Margaret, in tones that would have melted anything but the heart of Barnsley. 'But Miss Winston will surely be of use to you in arranging your papers and making out inventories; and let me hope that the affection of your child——'

'No!' cried Barnsley, sternly interrupting her, 'Miss Winston can be of no use. The proper officers must make out the lists; as to you, Margaret, you would be only in my way.'

'Dear, dear papa!'

'If you have so mighty an affection for me, why have you of late so thwarted my wishes?'

'*Have* I thwarted them?—Only tell me *how*—that I may not repeat the offence!'

'You fancy that the only son of the Duke of Grantville will prove such a meek-mouthed ass as his cousin, and come a second time with proposals for your hand?—No, no—Margaret! Your day is done. All I ask you is to reflect on the different position in which I should have stood on this fatal discovery, had *you* been provided for by a match with Lord Buckhurst. But as you have made your bed, so you must lie down.'

'I desire nothing, father, but to share your fortunes, whatever they be,'—said Margaret, in a tremulous voice.

'Where is the kindness of *sharing* fortunes already too scanty?'—cried the hard-hearted man of business. 'However, it is useless to recur to the past. When Lord Buckhurst reads my name in next Saturday's Gazette, he may congratulate himself on having avoided a disgraceful connexion; and, when Lady Walmer finds to-morrow, on calling here, that the fastidious Miss Barnsley is gone down into Kent in the stage, (yes! Margaret, start as much as you will,—our carriage is ours no longer,—and for the last shilling in our pockets we are accountable to the creditors) —she will wish the Grantvilles joy of their escape.'

'I did not flinch at the notion of the stage. I am quite

indifferent to my mode of conveyance; and only grieve at the thought of leaving you to confront these vexations alone,' said Miss Barnsley, almost strengthened by his harshness.

'I tell you your staying here would create a thousand inconveniences; it is, in short, out of the question. *I must* be on the spot. At present, thanks to my parliamentary privileges, my position is less imminent than the villany of that fellow Closeman might have made it. Here is my purse, Margaret,' said he, going to his secretaire, and taking out a considerable roll of bank-notes and a purse of sovereigns, 'or rather let me deposit it with Miss Winston, who will be exempted from scrutiny. On her you can rely for your immediate expenses.'

'At what hour do you wish us to go, sir?' said the governess, receiving the notes to which the urgency of circumstances imparted such value.

'At what hour do *I* wish? You forget, ma'am, how little authority my inclinations can just now exercise. Stage coaches have their own hours; while *I*—' he paused. Even the bitterness of Barnsley's spirit, at that moment, recoiled from proclaiming the insignificance to which he found himself reduced.

'But will it not look strange to the servants, sir,' said Miss Winston, profiting by this momentary pause, 'and serve to spread prematurely the news of what has occurred, if Miss Barnsley is thus immediately placed in so public and unusual a situation?'

'Spread the news prematurely!'—cried Barnsley. 'Look strange to the servants! What *can* you mean, ma'am, by raising such frivolous objections?—Do you think we are in a situation to care for the remarks of servants?—I will answer for it, that before noon to-morrow, not one of them but will have asked for his wages and applied to be off!—The whole affair will be in the Westerton paper.—Perhaps, by this very time, they know all!'

'Lawton is a respectable man, and much attached to the family,' said Miss Winston, suspecting, and with reason, that she was classed by her patron only among the upper servants.

'Yes, to the family of Mr. Barnsley of Stokeshill Place.

It remains to be proved what he will be to the family of John Barnsley, the bankrupt.'

'If we were to take him with us to-morrow for protection?'—Miss Winston began.

'No!—he must remain here to give up his plate. Take John with you, if you fancy you can't stir without a servant.'

'Sir!—at Miss Barnsley's age—'

'Ah! Miss Barnsley must learn now to give up all ideas of that kind!—However, John is not wanted here. He is a Stokeshill man, and can readily be discharged in the country. I shall give him orders to attend you.'

'At what hour, Sir?'

'The early coach starts at nine, from the other side of Westminster Bridge. I suppose, under all the circumstances, you will be glad to get out of London before people are about.'

'Just as you please, Sir; at nine we will be ready.'

'I shall see you, papa, before we set off?' said Margaret, whose articulation was impeded by the state of nervous trepidation to which such a succession of shocks had reduced her tender frame.

'No! I shall wish you good bye *now*, Margaret. I shall be off at daybreak to Totteridge. Fagg is down at his place at Totteridge, for his children's Midsummer holidays; and, at present, I have only been able to see his young partner, who knows no more of business than a post. I must get down to Fagg—I must talk with Fagg. Fagg is the only man who has the least insight into my affairs. I must be up at six—'tis nearly twelve.'

'We had better retire, then?' said Miss Winston, taking the hint.

'Yes, yes—take her to bed—she will be better in bed! Good night, Margaret, you shall hear from me, my dear, in the course of a day or two. You will do no good by fretting. I recommend—ha!—Miss Winston! lend me your arm!—Support her while I ring for water! She is gone—she has fainted!'

CHAPTER XXXII.

Broken as she was in mind and body, Margaret obeyed her father's commands, and departed on the morrow.

'You are not able to go, my dear; you will be taken ill on the road,' said Miss Winston.

'No!' replied the unhappy girl, 'I have too much courage to fall sick at such a moment. We should harass my father by remaining here. Let us go.' And they went.

Barnsley's prognostications were negatived, by the deference testified towards Margaret by every member of the household, the moment the secret of her father's difficulties transpired.

'My dear young lady,' said Gladstone, with tears streaming down her cheeks, 'command my services and all our services in the way you like best. Heaven knows you have been an angel among us; and all we wish is, to show our respect and gratitude. If I am not in the way, indulge me by letting me go down and take care of you at Stokeshill; if I am an incumbrance, discharge me without ceremony, and promise to take me back should better times admit.'

'Speak to her,' said Margaret to Miss Winston, in a scarcely audible voice. 'I am too much oppressed to tell them what I feel.' And, having pressed poor Gladstone's hand, she quitted the room to enable the governess to express Mr. Barnsley's desire that all the servants, not absolutely necessary, should quit his house. Their claims would be considered hereafter.

On taking her departure from the home in which, two days before, she had reigned supreme, and happy as loveliness, prosperity, and the supposition of being beloved could make her, Margaret took with her only the friend, to whom, from the first moment of her existence, she had been a sole object of affection. But she noted not this humiliation. To have travelled in a cart or waggon, had been a matter of equal indifference. Her father was sending her from him. She was going from a home no longer theirs, to one which would soon be theirs no longer. She was going from the city, which was about to witness the nuptials of Woodgate and Helen, to a town where her father had already drunk deep of the

cup of bitterness, and was about to be trailed ignominiously in the dust!

Throughout the six hours of their journey, though Lawton's almost paternal care had provided that his young lady should be alone, the governess preserved a considerate silence; and, on arriving at the Angel at Westerton, the hostess, usually all garrulity, took instant warning from the miserable aspect of Miss Barnsley (whose arrival in such a mode would otherwise have excited a torrent of ejaculations), to conduct Margaret to the most secluded chamber, to bring refreshments unordered, and unordered convey a private entreaty, in her own name, to the Vicarage, for Mrs. Holdfast's carriage for her use: for those whom we call the vulgar, sometimes display a delicacy that might put Almack's and its altitudes to shame.

It was lucky that Miss Winston was on the spot for acknowledgments. Margaret was in no state to notice the kindness heaped upon her. Arrived at Stokeshill, installed in her chamber,—(her chamber!)—she suffered them to place her in bed; and, as she closed her eyes, would have ventured a prayer to heaven that they might evermore remain unopened, had she not known that she was the only earthly solace of the poor governess, and hoped to become the only earthly solace of her father! Margaret was not in a position to admit of egotism; others were depending upon her for consolation.

That evening, that night, and some part of the following day, she remained absorbed in a species of feverish insensibility from which Miss Winston felt that it would be cruel to rouse her. Nature, by an effort of her own, at length threw off this lethargy; and the moment Margaret became thoroughly conscious of her situation, her fortitude effected the rest. She rose, resolved upon activity. But to what purpose? At present, she knew not in what mode her services might be available. She was ignorant in every particular how to proceed; and, as her father had expressly said, 'You shall hear from me in a few days,' she dared not write to ask instructions. Sheriff's officers, it appeared, were in the house to prevent any removal of property. But they were out of sight; they gave no offence; they even caused it to be expressed to Miss Barnsley, that they were

there merely for form's sake, and trusted to prove no annoyance to the family.

It was midsummer. All was beauty and luxuriance in the park and gardens. Great exertions had been made by the gardeners, in their young lady's flower garden and conservatory, to greet her return from town; and Nature, whose exertions are evermore accomplishing (and for such ingrates), had wrought her own silent wonders. After the dingy squares and smoke-dried parks of London, the beeches and chestnuts of Stokeshill seemed endowed with almost supernatural intensity of verdure. The untrimmed masses of trees, with whose drooping branches the luxuriant grass seemed rising to intermingle, were alive with birds. The grasshopper and cricket were singing below, the thrush and nightingale above. The air was loaded with fragrance, the thickets were bright with roses, the blue sky over all, was vivid with its purest transparence. Never had the country appeared in greater perfection. Not so much as a gravelly bank overhung with heath, thyme, and furze blossoms, but had a beauty and a brilliancy of its own.

When, in the calm of the second evening, Margaret stole out upon the lawn, unalarmed by the apprehension of meeting or being met, these summer glories burst upon her so overpoweringly, that tears gushed from her eyes. Poor Stokeshill! how could it look so lovely and breathe so deliciously, when its patrons were condemned to so much suffering! How trimly, how ornate, how cared for,—its beautiful shrubberies and parterres,—now sentenced to furnish the daily bread of those to whom they had hitherto ministered only delight?—How little did all she looked upon take the colour of the fate to which it was falling!

It was one of those soft, still, transparent, summer evenings, when the lingering twilight loses itself imperceptibly in moonlight. There was no moment of darkness: ere the last golden reflection of the setting sun vanished away, the full moon was bringing every tree and flower into notice, with tints more subdued, but a distinctness peculiar to the hour. Margaret's favourite rose-trees, which, with her own hands, she had transplanted the preceding autumn near a favourite seat, seemed to look out at her through their blossoms, as if claiming her admiration of their beauty,

and wondering why she took so little heed. Alas! she *did* take heed! She remembered, with an acuteness scarcely supportable, how large a portion that spot and its adornments had maintained in her dreams of approaching happiness;—how she had wished it might be beautiful in order that even *he* might admit she had added a charm to Stokeshill! —And now it was before her; all light, all loveliness, all fragrance, all bloom! and she was alone there, alone in the body, as in the spirit; alone beneath the old oak tree, unheeded by a single human being! Of the two companions, with whom she had trusted to revisit the place, her father was away, struggling with his troubles and insensible to hers; and Woodgate away, bewildered by his joys and hopes, and scarcely conscious of her existence.

She had walked for nearly an hour, slowly pacing the most secluded parts of the shrubberies, before she was aware that Miss Winston was following her, watching every faltering step, trembling at every agitated gesture. At length, as she paused in a thicket of acacia trees, whose white blossoms were shedding like snow upon the ground without a breath of air to shake them from the bough, on the verge of the American garden which, even in the moonlight, was bright with the thousand hues of its rhododendrons, azaleas, and kalmias,—the good woman ventured to overtake her.

'We saw nothing in London so beautiful as this,' said Margaret, pointing to the gorgeous sheeting of bloom; and taking, unasked, the arm of her friend. 'I little thought I should ever triumph in the beauty of this place from the feelings which it now inspires!'

'I never saw Stokeshill in higher perfection,' responded Miss Winston, not wishing to press her by interrogation.

'Never! If it should but continue to look as it does, my father will soon obtain a tenant. Think of having to desire increase of beauty in a beloved object, only to render it attractive to a rival!'

'Since it appears impossible for Mr. Barnsley to remain here, it is desirable to have the place well let,' observed the matter-of-fact governess. 'But, as your father remarked the other night, Stokeshill is not an advantageous property for the common run of tenants.'

'The farm will of course be let separately. For the farm,

he is sure of a tenant; and thus, however great our mortifications, my father can only be reduced to comparative poverty. He will still, I should think, retain about a thousand a-year. How many people would consider themselves rich with a thousand a-year!'

Poor Miss Winston sighed a mournful response.

'It would be sinful, therefore, to despond over the pecuniary part of our distresses. Rather let me be grateful to heaven for preserving my poor father from ruin, by means of this lucky settlement.'

'If you could but bring poor Mr. Barnsley to the same way of thinking!'

'In time! We cannot expect him to reconcile himself at once to the loss of so fine a fortune, and through the roguery of one he trusted as a friend. But my father has so much activity of mind, that when his energies once come into play, I am not afraid. The great object with us both must be to leave Kent.'

'Ah! Margaret!'

'No! I am not thinking of Hawkhurst, I am thinking of my father. He will have to create a new standard of family importance. It never can be done in his former neighbourhood.'

'His first task, I admit, ought to be to forget Stokeshill. But yours, my dear—whose life has been spent here—who have known nothing else—'

'*My* object is my father. If my good offices tend to alleviate his misfortunes, my existence will not be altogether useless.'

Miss Winston affectionately pressed her arm. 'Good will come out of evil, then, for both of us!' said she, striving to speak cheerfully. '*You* will find your account in Mr. Closeman's bankruptcy, as well as myself!'

'Do *you*, then, benefit by *it*?'—exclaimed Margaret, greatly surprised. 'I little imagined there could be a bright side to such a prospect!'

'Only so far, my dear, that you will scarcely find courage to turn me out of doors, now I have no longer a shilling in the world,' resumed the poor woman, with a melancholy smile. 'Had *you* continued rich, and I competent, I must have lost you, Margaret! At your marriage, if not

sooner, I must have been thrown aside, like a worn-out garment.'

'No, no!'—cried Margaret Barnsley, deep emotion thrilling in her bosom.

'My child, you would have had no voice in the business. Your father, or your husband, could not be expected to bear the company of a tiresome old governess,—a sort of *memento mori* in the family. But charity will now secure me a corner of the house, where I shall see you every day, and be happy.'

'But my father always assured me he had made you independent,' said Margaret, in a broken voice.

'My annuity will fall to Mr. Barnsley's creditors: and my small savings (which by his advice I invested in Closeman's bank) are of course gone with the rest!'

'And you are absolutely destitute!' sobbed Margaret, clasping her hand. 'You have given us your whole life,—and not so much as bread for your old age in return!—Have I been indeed so selfish as to overlook this, in the thought of my own miseries!—I, who am young—who can work,—who can *want*—'

'No, Margery, you can do neither; nor will circumstances, I trust, render it necessary. *Your* duty will be to bear with a hasty temper, made irritable by adversity,—and to forbear from clinging to recollections of the past.'

'And yours!—*You* who have sacrificed everything!—who have passed through life without enjoyment—'

'Are you so ungrateful as to say so,—to think so?—My dear child, I have been only too uniformly happy; nay, I shall be so still, if you promise me a nook of house-room, where I may assist your labours and lighten your duties.'

'What right have I to repine!'—was Miss Barnsley's reflection at the close of this affecting conversation. 'What are my losses to hers? and how trivial is *my* resignation compared with that of this best of creatures!'

The following day, however, brought an accession of mortification. Letters poured in upon Miss Barnsley, as they do upon all those who are fated to be extraordinarily glad or extraordinarily sorry, and to whom they consequently prove a peculiar inconvenience. Not an iota of the impertinence of condolence was spared to the bankrupt's daughter!

—Lady Withamstead wrote a long-winded protestation that 'she could venture to assert that circumstances produced no alteration in *her* feelings towards her friends; that she trusted her old neighbours would not imagine anything which had occurred would render them less welcome guests at Withamstead Hall; that she was happy to say "Lord W." would lose only 437*l.* by the bankruptcy of Closeman, Barnsley, and Co.; and that as soon as the restoration of domestic tranquillity to the Hall, after the nuptials of her beloved son George with Lady Florinda O'Brallaghan, and her beloved daughter Felicia with the Rev. Dr. Wintingham would permit, Mr. Barnsley and her young friend should come and pay them a quiet visit with no one but their family party.' Margaret's 'sincere friend and well-wisher' ended by acquainting her, as a bit of county news, that their neighbour, Miss Sullivan, was going to bestow herself and her fifty thousand pounds on Sir Henry Woodgate,—and a very pretty couple they were like to make!

Still more trying than this, were the civilities of Lady Walmer. 'Had I been aware, my dear Miss Barnsley, that your father was in business,' wrote the Countess, 'I should perhaps have more strenuously pressed upon your acceptance the eligible settlement in life which you so inopportunely rejected while under my protection. I cannot forgive you for having so trifled with your prospects. However, perhaps everything is for the best. The Duke and Duchess of Grantville are extremely satisfied with the sudden transfer of their son's affections to Lord Tynemouth's youngest daughter; nor do I fancy he has anything to fear from the cruelty of Jessie Devereux. She is a very sweet girl, and not indisposed to become a Marchioness. His marriage will very likely be celebrated at the same time with that of his cousin Miss Sullivan with Sir Henry Woodgate, at the announcement of which, the family seem highly delighted. Pray, my dear Miss B., let me know, at your leisure, how you have got through your embarrassments. Many of my friends inquire concerning you; and I have at present no satisfactory answer to give.

'*Au reste*, should you find the change in your circumstances render it necessary for you to do something for yourself, let me be the first to hear of it; as I think I might

have opportunities of placing you to your satisfaction. My nephew Lord de Hartenfield is likely to go to Madras, and his young wife will want a companion; and my cousin Lady Mull (who resides at her husband's castle in the Isle of Skye,) is in want, at this very time, of a nursery governess. Things, however, may turn out better than you expect. Your friend Miss Winston, having been so many years in your family, has probably taken care of herself: but if not, and she is likely to be in distress, remember I am a patroness of the Governess's Friend Society. Your old acquaintances the Devereux have just come in, and beg to unite with me in kind remembrances.'

Bad as this was, an accompanying letter from her father was infinitely worse. After elaborate instructions upon various matters of business, and apprising her that as soon as his docket was struck, everything at Stokeshill was to be submitted to sale by public auction, he continued—'With respect to Miss Winston, her own sense will point out that in the reduced state of my circumstances, it is impossible for me to maintain a useless old woman in my establishment. The sooner she provides for herself the better. You must tell her this,—of course, with due regard to her feelings.'

Tell her to provide for herself!—Dismiss her like a menial! —Bid her go forth into the world without a roof to shelter her or a morsel to sustain her! The mother of her childhood, —the friend of her maturity!

To offer a statement of the state of destitution to which poor Miss Winston was reduced, did not occur to Margaret as likely to mollify the feelings of her father. She therefore wrote in reply:—'With respect to Miss Winston, remember that, at present, it would be impossible for me to remain here without her protection. A few weeks, a few months, and we shall better understand our own position. Lady Walmer has promised my poor friend her patronage, and there is no reason to apprehend that she will become a burthen upon any one.'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A FEW more weeks of that bright and balmy season; and every day became marked by some developed charm in Stokeshill, and some mortifying incident in the progress of Barnsley's affairs. Parliament was up. Sometimes he was in town with his solicitors;—sometimes at the Place with the Sheriff's officers. Advertisements of the sale of his effects appeared in all the county,—all the London newspapers. Catalogues were made out;—everything was dislodged from its position and heaped in most admired disorder, according to the taste and fancy of the deputies of the auctioneer; while one of George Robins's Ciceronian manifestoes acquainted England in general, and Kent in particular, that

'BY ORDER OF THE ASSIGNEES,

'ON TUESDAY, the 24th of AUGUST, and the following days, he would submit to the public, the genuine property of John Barnsley, Esq. M.P.

A SERVICE OF SOLID SILVER,

comprehending two soup tureens, four hash-dishes with heaters, eight oval ditto in sizes, a haunch dish, two vegetable ditto, with covers, and

FOUR PAIR OF SAUCE BOATS,

with other requisites for a family of the first description,

OF THE KING'S FIDDLE PATTERN.

Also, a handsome suite of drawing-room furniture, of rich apple-green damask. Brussels carpets, rosewood tables, consoles, &c. &c.

&c. &c. &c.'

Not an article, from a birch-broom to a dairy dish, was omitted in the frivolous and vexatious catalogue, printed by the identical Westerton press which had perpetuated the electioneering courtesies of Barnsley! A sale ticket was on Margaret's favourite work-table,—another on her piano-

forte. When all the preparations were complete, she walked calmly through the rooms to contemplate the work of humiliation, the throbbings of her proud heart reminding her that such a lesson might still be useful!

By way of sparing her the spectacle, however, Barnsley had, from the first, been anxious that she should seize the opportunity for her visit to Withamstead. But, for such a trial, at such a moment, Margaret felt her courage insufficient; and as Nurse Molyneux's cottage, a decent farmhouse adjoining the rectory of Stokeshill, and previously to its erection the domicile of the incumbent, had three spare rooms, occasionally let to summer tenants, it was settled that Miss Winston and her charge should become, for a month or two, the inmates of the gratified old woman. Barnsley seemed to take delight in exposing himself to irritation by contact with the minions of the law; but Margaret was glad to shrink into her obscure retreat,—secure, if not from trouble, from observation.

Not a house in the village but would have gladly opened to receive her! The poor are nice observers; and those of Stokeshill discriminated between the daughter and the father. Had Margaret been the sufferer by Closeman's bankruptcy, they would have repressed their exultation at discovering that, instead of losing nineteen shillings in the pound, they would not lose nineteen pence; but as it was Barnsley's loss which was their gain, it was impossible to restrain their twofold joy. Barnsley to be humiliated!—the workhouse-grinder to come to want!—The depresser of wages, the raiser of tithes, to be stripped of his spoils! The weigher out of the widow's bread to have his own apportioned. The circumscriber of the orphan's raiment to go threadbare! Glorious,—glorious retribution!

The moral of the case thus settled, its incidents were scarcely less acceptable at Stokeshill; for there was to be a sale at the Place!—Of all the crises of country life, a sale is the most exciting. By a sale, any one and every one may become a gainer; and a whole neighbourhood is collected in a second, by the warning of a carpet hanging out of a window. Cinnamon Lodge had done nothing for them in this particular;—Cinnamon Lodge, with its spruce lawn and birch-broom shrubberies, had been hired by Closeman of the

executor of a deceased Mr. Pinchplumb, grocer in the High Street of Westerton. But Stokeshill Place, with its service of plate and rosewood consoles, its four-post bedsteads and cut steel fenders, its collection of exotics and all the rest of its appurtenances, promised a charming enlivenment to the dulness of the autumn. The whole hundred participated in the emotion of the village. Mrs. Timmins, of Westerton Market Place, had an eye to the 'library furnitur'.' Mrs. Holdfast had obtained a promise from the vicar to bid for 'the charott,' Mrs. Dobbs had fixed on the 'rosood consols:' Mrs. Squills wanted 'the *Dirly* breakfast chayney.' There was not an article under Barnsley's roof, but some friendly neighbour had pre-appropriated. As the day approached, indeed, rumours gained ground that the sale would be postponed, or altogether evaded. Some insisted, with a magnanimous disdain of the compatibilities of time and place for which rumourers are remarkable, that Colonel Clement Barnsley, on hearing, at Calcutta, of his brother's bankruptcy, had sent him a prodigious fortune per return of fleet; and that as soon as the indigo and averdivats could be sold, Closeman and Co. were to pay twenty-one shillings in the pound. Others, recalling the newspaper paragraphs of the spring, protested that the Duke of Grantville had bought in the four pair of sauce tureens, &c. of Stokeshill Place, to make a present to the Marchioness of Buckhurst on her nuptials; and divers other hypotheses, equally deserving of credit, were successively put forth by the ten thousand tongues of gossip. Still, the tickets remained fixed upon both four-post bedsteads and fenders; and Parson Drewe not only continued to bet ten to one that George Robins and the 24th of August would arrive at Stokeshill Place together, but assiduously to disparage in the county of Kent, the favourite mare of the unfortunate man of business, which he was fully determined to transfer to the hunting stables of Wynnex Vicarage!

On the 23rd, the Place was opened to public view; and Margaret and Miss Winston were sufficiently molested by clouds of dust through the latticed window of Mrs. Molyneux's cottage, and heard sufficient rattling of carts and carriages towards the Lodge, to make them rejoice that Barnsley was safe in London. Scarcely one of their neigh-

bours was forbearing on the occasion. With admirable bad taste, Alfred Drewe drove over Lord Shoreham's showy set of greys; and all Westerton, mounted or dismounted, came pouring its way towards the gates. Lady Henry Marston travelled twelve miles, in hopes of finding something to amuse her fashionable correspondents at the expense of the discomfited beauty of the season, who had rejected her for Lady Walmer; while stupid George was driven over by Lady Florinda Holloway, in a new phaeton, on which were emblazoned, with all the learning of Long Acre, the united arms of the houses of Holloway and O'Brallaghan.

It was a heavy day for Margaret. Where is the head or heart of eighteen years' inexperience, to which religion or philosophy ever imparted courage to meet such a reverse with equanimity?—So near the scene of action, too, that to bend her thoughts to any other subject was impossible!—There was more than misfortune in the dethronement her father was undergoing. There was injury,—there was wrong. It was no fault of his, which thus wrested from him his most intimate possessions;—the bed in which, for so many years, he had lain down to rest,—the plate on which he had fed,—the desk at which he had laboured for the benefit of mankind. What had he done to merit such spoliation?—How had his useful and inoffensive existence called down such heavy chastisement?—It was lucky that these reflections passed silently through the mind of Margaret; for her venerable friend might perhaps have breathed an involuntary check to her adjurations.

'Will you let me read to you?' said poor Margaret, when at length so far able to subdue her thronging cares, as to remember that forced occupation is sometimes a relief. And, on obtaining Miss Winston's assent, who was sitting patiently at work as far as possible out of sight of the window, she drew a chair close to her friend, and with one hand on her knee, read aloud a few pages of Cowper's Task, in a voice which might have reached the heart of the coldest auditor, aware of the injuries at that moment weighing down her young head.

The following day, these detailed vexations were repeated; but in the evening, when the stir and tumult of the exhibition was in suspense, Miss Winston invited her drooping

charge to refresh herself with a little air in the vicarage garden. Old Mr. Harden was just then absent at another living possessing claims upon his pastorship doubling the amount of those at Stokeshill, whose small tithes (to the value of one hundred and fifty pounds a year), served little more than to remunerate the curate, who buried and christened, and preached Sherlock's sermons in his name; and the garden had been placed at the disposal of Mrs. Molyneux's inmates. But Margaret, though secure from observation among its sober arbours of clipt yew, had not courage to accompany her friend; and the moment Nurse Molyneux discovered that 'the poor thing was left quite lonesome, she betook herself to the sitting-room to disappoint her anticipations of the relief of a single solitary hour.

'Why, Miss Margaret, my dear!—all alone by owl-light, as the saying is?'—cried the loquacious old woman, bringing in a basket of fruit as a plea for her intrusion.

'I persuaded Miss Winston to take her evening walk. I fancied being alone might relieve my head-ache.'

'Head-ache, poor soul!—No wonder you've a head-ache, —sitting cooped up all day, in this hot room, when all the world's about and stirring.—Wouldn't you like a little mint-tea, my dear?—Mint-tea's a fine thing for a head-ache.'

'I like nothing but quiet!' said Margaret, in despair.

'Ah! just like all young people!'—cried Mrs. Molyneux, officiously dusting the table, preparatory to setting out her apricots and green-gages to the best advantage. 'Young people loves to make the most of their troubles. Bless their poor hearts!—as if they wouldn't see enough on 'em,—and to spare, afore they die.'

'*I* shall probably see enough of them!' burst involuntarily from the lips of Margaret.

'Not you, my dear!—When things comes to the worst, as the saying is, 'tis a sign they'll mend. Take my word for it, Miss, your papa will find a silver spoon in his mouth afore he's 'ware on it.'

'You have heard, I suppose, the foolish report of my uncle Clement's having made my father his heir?'

'Not I, my dear. I was a looking nearer home. What should you say now to a capital tenant for Stokesel Place?'

'A tenant already for Stokeshill!—I should say that

we were sadly lucky!'—said Margaret, with a melancholy smile. 'But who has offered?'

'No one at present, as I'm 'ware on; but I'll just give you an idea of the business, from first to last. You see, my dear, I never intended (as I was a telling you o' Thursday), to set foot in the sale. As an old servant of the house, I knew as my feelings would be hurt. But Mrs. Woods, she stepped in yesterday morning, and Mrs. Abdy, she took her tea with me last night; and neither of 'em as would hear of my not getting some sort of inkling how things was going on. Not a single soul o' the genteeler folks of Westerton but was present yesterday, miss, at the first bid; and by the same token, what should it be but a servants' hall cruet-stand, as was knocked down for two and twenty shilling, to Mrs. Trollope o' Shoe Lane!—So afore tea was over last night, I half agreed to keep neighbour Abdy company this morning. And so says she to me, as I was a sugaring her tea, says she, "Mrs. Molyneux, what 'ud you say if I was to live to see Sir Henry Woodgate the bridegroom, settled at Stokesel Place?'"

Margaret started.

'So in course I answered, my dear, that it 'ud be a sorry day for me to see my young lady turned out o' house and home. But if so be as the thing was to hap, better make way for a Woodgate than for e'er another. So says Mrs. Abdy says she,—"Well!—stranger things have come to pass. For," says she, "this morning, soon as ever the lodge gates was open at the Place, comes a young gentleman a horseback, who seemed anxious like not to break in on none o' the family, and not to be in nobody's way; but just went over the house and gardens without so much as a question asked; and would hardly stay to look at the forcing-houses, as Bernard Smith the gardener was wanting to show him."—Well, my dear, scarcely had he mounted his horse and rode into Westerton, afore (as Mrs. Abdy was a telling me), the people from the lodge was up at the Place with news, as the strange gentleman was neither more nor less than our new member!'

'Sir Henry Woodgate?'

'Ay, Sir Henry himself, as sure as a gun! And when Bernard heard his name, why then, in course, he recollected having seen him on the hustings; only while they was a-talk-

ing together, Bernard remembered his person, but couldn't put a name on't. Howsever, this morning, as I was a-saying just now, they persisted as I should look at the sale, if it was only to hear the fine dicshonary words as the Lon'on hog-shineer makes use on to call a broom or a pair o' bellows by names as they's not used to go by. So (not to be unneighbourly, as they'd set their mind on my company,) I goes;—and a very fine sight it wur to see all the gentry a walking in the pleasure grounds and a crowding to look at the furnitur. So as I was there, I thought I'd just set it out, and see how things was going; and if you'll believe me, miss, not an article as is any ways fitted to the house, such as carpets, curtains, and the like, but was bought in by young Mrs Richard Dobbs.'

'Do you think the Dobbses are inclined to hire Stokeshill?'—demanded Margaret, eagerly seizing the idea.

'No, my dear. I war standing as nigh to her chair as I be to yourn; and overheard her a telling old Mrs. Holdfast, as her husband had promised Sir Henry Woodgate to secure the fixtures; but Mr. Richard had been called away to town, and so she war a hacting in his room.'

'Perhaps you misunderstood her?—Perhaps—'

'No, my dear.—Though getting in years, I'm not hard o' hearing. Besides, there was soon no other talk in the house but that Sir Henry Woodgate had made an offer for the property.'

'An offer to *purchase* Stokeshill!'

'It ben't to be sold;—he's going to take it on lease, in order to be near his constityents (as lawyer Dobbs calls the borough o' Westerton), and to please my Lady Woodgate as is to be,—who, they say, is main fond o' the neighbourhood. I'll just leave you to guess, Miss Margery, if the Stokeshill folks is pleased!'

'And you really believe this report to be true?'

'As gospel, my dear. You see, Bernard was half out of his wits for joy. For Bernard's uncle, old James Smith, he's been head gardener at Hawkhurst these fifteen year, or thereabout; and Bernard feels as good as sure of keeping his place with the new family; and 'tis a great comfort to the poor fellow, what was so fond of you, Miss Barnsley, to think he was like to have another young missus o' your own kind;

cos he tells me as Miss Helen (though not so fond o' flowers as *you*) is quite the lady.'

Margaret vainly tried to refrain from a heavy sigh.

'And then, (as I was saying to neighbour Woods, who couldn't contain herself at the thought o' having her own young gentleman settled at his own estate,) says I, It 'll be so pleasant for poor Miss Margaret to come a visiting to her friend Miss Sullivan as is, Lady Woodgate as is to be, and feel all as one as if she war at home again. And indeed, my dear, if things *was* to turn out so, why, to be sure, this last stroke is the luckiest thing in the varsal world.'

Margaret could not say 'amen!'—She felt that she ought to rejoice in a circumstance tending to enhance the value of her father's small remaining property: but to exult in that which was to bring Woodgate, as master, to that very Stokeshill which it had been the fond dream of her soul to bestow upon him, was impossible.—It was from Helen Sullivan he was now about to receive it!—Helen's fortune had doubtless enabled him to aspire to the purchase; and would afford the means of figuring there with becoming splendour. Margaret was not only to see the man she loved, happy in the affections of another; but they were to enjoy together the very Eden she had created, while her father and herself were cast out to poverty!

Her dearest hope, too, since the disasters of her family, had been to avoid all contact with Helen or her lover, till the lapse of years should have obliterated the past. And now, it seemed scarcely possible that the negociations about to take place could be concluded without a personal interview. The single occasion on which Woodgate and herself had formerly met at Stokeshill, had been painful enough. But to receive him there *now*—in her humiliation—in her grief—in her despair,—would be too bitter a trial. Even her usual reflection—'if for my father's advantage, so let it be!' failed her on the present occasion.

'I'm sure, my dear miss,' pursued Mrs. Molyneux, who had been maundering on, uninterrupted, during Miss Barnsley's reverie,—'it will be a great comfort to think that all your pets and gimcumcracks at Stokesel will go to one as has your particular good will, such as Squire Sullivan's daughter. I heard Mrs. Richard Dobbs a-saying to Mr. Squills, as he was

a putting her into her chay, that they'd got the order to bid for everything as war your'n,—the pianny and pikturs, and saddle horse, and—'

'Khaled, too! — everything — *everything!*' — exclaimed Margaret; and she was on the point of giving herself up to a violent burst of emotion, when Miss Winston, returning at that moment from her walk, fortunately put an end to a conversation so fraught with painful disclosures, and restored poor Margaret to her self-command.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The day succeeding the last of the sale brought a letter from Barnsley, desiring his daughter to remain at the cottage till further orders; and the week of suspense that followed was indeed a heavy burthen. Mrs. Molyneux brought daily rumours from the village that, 'for sartain sure the Place was let to Sir Henry Woodgate;' and Miss Winston offered twenty times a day to Margaret the same sage commentary that 'time would show.'

At length, when ten weary days had elapsed, as Margaret was retiring late one night to her humble bed, she was startled by an unusual bustle; and her father, shabby, haggard, and irritable, made his appearance. He would not allow Miss Winston to be called up. He chose to have tea, and a *tête-à-tête* with his daughter.

'I was afraid you were never coming down again,' said Margaret, noticing with tearful eyes the change that care had already effected in her father's manly appearance.

'You thought, perhaps, I was dawdling away my time in town?'

'I concluded you were detained by business.'

'People who have nothing to do, and are in the habit of enjoying themselves in ease and comfort, are sure to fancy that others have their time at their own disposal!'

Margaret looked down. She felt that a single glance round the homely room in which she was accused of enjoying herself in comfort, might convey too forcible an appeal against the injustice of her father.

'But whatever you may have concluded,' he resumed, 'I

have managed to get through a considerable deal of business. I have all but settled matters with Sir Henry Woodgate.'

'The report is true, then, that he has hired Stokeshill?'

'*Hired* Stokeshill!—Who raised such a report?—From whom did you hear it?'

'It is generally said in the village.'

'Have you amused yourself, then, Margaret, during my absence, by gossiping with the blackguards of Stokeshill village?'

'I heard only through Mrs. Molyneux that the people at home believed Stokeshill to be let to Sir Henry Woodgate.'

'The people at *home!*'—ejaculated poor Barnsley, with bitterness.

'But I own, I hoped they were mistaken.'

'Why should you *hope* any such thing?'

'I imagined that, under all the circumstances, he was one of the last persons you would desire to have for a tenant.'

'You imagined nonsense!—What can I care who gets Stokeshill, or anything else belonging to me?—The Grand Signior might have it now for aught I care!—But Sir Henry is not to be my tenant. I have made an arrangement with the trustees, and Woodgate has *bought* the Place.'

'Bought the Place!' said Margaret, calmly, as though the announcement conveyed no definite idea to her mind.

'He and his wife will be settled here before Christmas. Why, what are you whimpering at, Margaret?—You have known from the first that Stokeshill was to go. You cannot but perceive, that it is impossible for the property, which is to furnish our sole means of subsistence, to lie like a lump of lead upon our hands? As to the mortification of seeing it pass back again into the enjoyment of the Woodgates, whose name, Heaven knows! has embittered the possession ever since it has been in mine, I have my compensation in the knowledge that the pride of the family has put several thousand pounds in my pocket. I gave them five and thirty thousand. I estimate my improvements and acquisitions at five; and I have got forty-three!—I asked forty-five; but I found I should lose rather than gain by holding out. A young man on the eve of marriage looks less closely to business than a man with the care of a family on his shoulders. Next year he might have drawn back.

In short, we have struck hands on the bargain. The deeds of conveyance are making out, and I shall soon be without a stick or stone I can call my own, and the world before me to begin anew.'

'Forty-three thousand pounds!'—murmured Margaret, whose mind was engrossed by her Sullivan and Woodgate view of the purchase; and who was far from intending to convey a reproof to her father's lamentations.

'Yes! I understand your taunt!—You mean, that a provision of three and forty thousand pounds, still raises me far above my original condition!'

'Indeed, my dearest father, I—

'But what is such a pittance, I should like to know,' interrupted Barnsley, 'when tied up with settlements and trusts?—Your cousin John Heaphy is one of the most pragmatical asses I ever met with!'

Having never before heard mention of her cousin John Heaphy, Margaret had, of course, no opinion to offer in reply.

'Invested in government securities, the money will only return fifteen hundred a-year.'

'But with fifteen hundred a-year, may we not live in the utmost comfort?'

'Yes!—the *utmost!*' sneered Barnsley. 'Even after my certificate is signed, it would be a great satisfaction to Westerton, to return a member with fifteen hundred a year!—a great pride to Lady Walmer to produce in the world the daughter of a bankrupt with fifteen hundred a-year!'

'But leaving out of the question parliament and the great world?'

'Ay!—leaving out of the question every distinction worth obtaining. By the way, have you spoken to Miss Winston?'

'I—I thought it was understood that all such arrangements were postponed?'

'You must have wilfully misunderstood me, then!—What would you have me do with that old woman, without so much as a roof to hide my head under?'

'She has neither a friend nor a shilling in the world!' exclaimed Margaret, gaining courage from the urgency of the case. 'Father! the whole world will cry shame on

us, if, with fifteen hundred a-year, we turn her out to starve!'

'To starve!—why, what has the woman been about for the last twelve years, to lay by nothing out of a hundred guineas a-year, regularly paid, and everything on earth provided for her?—I'm sure it was not dress that ran away with her money.'

'No!—it was the Westerton Bank. She had invested the whole of her little property with Closeman, and has nothing remaining. The annuity,' continued Margaret, in a lower voice, 'is, of course, now out of the question.'

'Why out of the question?'—cried Barnsley, starting up. 'A pretty person to instruct others, if she is ignorant that, as a bond debt, it takes precedency. As to her savings, the estate pays seventeen and ninepence in the pound: so she is sure of about a hundred and forty pounds a-year.'

'Thank Heaven!'

'Besides, for some years to come, she may get another situation. She is not infirm; she is not much more helpless than she has always been. Even at Westerton, places fit for her are not wanting. Old Mrs. Holdfast has long talked of keeping a companion; and Mrs. Richard Dobbs's young family will soon want a governess. All that you must settle with her.'

'I cannot. On any other point, dear father, you will find me obedient; but to turn the friend—the mother of my youth, out of doors!—

'May I inquire out of what doors you are to turn her? May I ask what roof I have to afford her shelter?'

Margaret was silent.

'No more of this nonsense!—I have at least a right in my misfortunes to expect acquiescence and co-operation from my daughter. I have a great deal too much business on my hands to be harassed by your lamentations over parting from a prosy old woman.'

After this grievous denunciation, Margaret retired: and all that night, wept in wakeful silence by the side of her friend. When morning came, with a wild and haggard countenance, she prepared to disclose what she knew delay would elicit from the lips of her father, with unmeasured harshness. It was vain to preface the announcement by

the consolatory assurance that the annuity was safe. Miss Barnsley was only too well aware that the prospect of their approaching separation would mar these tidings of worldly prosperity.

'Do not afflict yourself thus, my poor child,' said the good woman, folding her to her bosom, and in Margaret's distress losing all consciousness of her own. 'Sooner or later, this misery must have come upon me. I have long prepared myself for it, Margaret, and I trust I have prepared *you*. A thorny path lies before you, my child, and you will have to walk in it uncounselled. Prove to me that my labours have not been thrown away, by submission now, and prudence hereafter.'

'And what is to become of you—where will you find a home?' cried the half-distracted girl.

'I have a sum in hand to answer all present exigencies. Your father assures us that my eventual prospects are secured. I shall therefore engage lodgings in Westerton.'

'In mean, odious Westerton!'

'I am less a stranger there than elsewhere. There I shall hear you spoken of—and there my poverty will command respect. Such as my pittance is, my dearest Margaret, remember that it is yours as though your mother offered to share it with you, should any future disaster cause you to need my humble protection. Wherever you go, my blessing will follow you;—wherever you need it, my poor judgment is at your service;—and whether you need it or not, the whole affection of my soul is fixed upon your welfare.'

'She judges very discreetly,' was Barnsley's sole remark, on hearing, in the course of the day from his daughter, that the governess had proceeded to Westerton in search of a residence. 'She feels that she is an incumbrance to us. In a few days, Margaret, I must remove to town, to be on the spot for the beginning of term. I am only waiting here to give up the Place to Sir Henry Woodgate. The effects seem already thoroughly cleared away. I find I have not so much as a rug to lie on, had I been inclined to sleep in the house.'

'I understand it was a condition of the sale that all should be removed within three days.'

'Was it?—I know nothing about the matter. Those

rogues the Dobbses have had the ordering of all. The Dobbses are at the bottom of the whole conspiracy to which I have been sacrificed. That clerk of Closeman's (Ben Adams, who drew out the agreement) was a nephew to old Dobbs. Manifest collusion.—However, it is useless now to descant upon it.'

Barnsley's object in thus hastening the departure of Miss Winston, was not altogether honourable to his integrity. Himself so lynx-eyed in matters of business, he had no faith in the inconceivable simplicity of the poor governess. He felt sure, not only that her ignorance respecting the annuity was pretended, but that she was perfectly versed in the nature of Margaret's rights in the Stokeshill estate, on which point he chose to maintain a strict reserve. Already a thousand difficulties had beset him in his negociations with his nephew, the surviving representative of the trustees of the property; and he had not patience for further opposition.

Much comment was, in fact, excited at Westerton by the peculiarities of the deed securing the Stokeshill estate to Mrs. Barnsley and her child and children;—the creditors of Closeman and Co., having fancied themselves entitled to Barnsley's life-interest in the property; whereas it appeared, on examination, that the trust was absolute in favour of the children; and that the husband, either by accident or design, was excluded from all benefit in the property. Barnsley said 'design,' protesting that old Winchmore, the partner of Mary's father, jealous of the sudden elevation of his clerk, had thought to deter him from the purchase of so vast an estate by insisting on its exclusive appropriation to her benefit; while he, in the enthusiastic eagerness to become proprietor of Stokeshill Place, would have consented even to a greater sacrifice. But others said 'accident;'—declaring that with all John Barnsley's self-asserted proficiency in the law, he had been over-reached by his former master.

The Dobbses, senior and junior, looked astounded but said nothing. They thought it a strange thing that of the two trustees, Winchmore, though represented by an infirm daughter, had never been replaced; while the other, Mr. Heaphy, a wholesale tradesman in the city, (brother-in-law of Barnsley, by marriage with his sister Sally), had exercised no discretion in the business. With him, indeed, the esquire of

Stokeshill, after his accession of property, had entertained little intercourse; with the son who succeeded him, none. It was remarkable, too, that a small farm, subsequently added to the estate, had been scrupulously annexed by Barnsley to the trust. These singularities, however, affected only his reputation as learned or unlearned in the law. The present crisis proved that Winchmore had done wisely. It was all the better for Barnsley's daughter, and all the worse for the bankrupt's estate. Harpenden and Hill congratulated him on his luck; John Fagg upon his prudence. The assignees looked black and held their peace.

It was Barnsley's turn, however, to look black when Sir Henry Woodgate, uninstructed of the discovery that had taken place, made liberal offers for Stokeshill. Deeply as he regretted the disadvantageous nature of the property, as the sole stay and support to his family, he felt the difficulty of effecting a transfer. Woodgate's terms, indeed, were such as any reasonable trustee was justified in accepting; and the moment was advantageous for the investment of the purchase-money in the funds to create a permanent income for the daughter, of whom he was the natural custodian. But what species of reason or reasoning might be exercised by his loving kinsman, John Heaphy the younger, Barnsley had still to learn. His sister and her plebeian husband had both departed this life so soon after his brilliant marriage, as to leave him only just time to betray towards them the pitiful disposition of the genuine *parvenu*. Scarcely had he taken possession of Stokeshill, than Cornhill became an abomination in his eyes; and having got up one of those ever-at-hand family squabbles which afford an excuse to the prosperous branches for alienating themselves from those less thriving, he allowed a coldness to spring up between them, followed by a bitter frost.

The Heaphys were stiff Presbyterians, righteous, if not over much, at least over and above the measure of worldly righteousness. Barnsley, though he had never beheld his nephew since he was of an age to canter round the room on his father's walking cane, entertained little doubt that Heaphy despised him as thoroughly for his parliamentary principles as for his want of kinsmanly affection. But conciliation was now his cue. It was necessary to obtain his

nephew's sanction to the sale of Stokeshill; and having ascertained that the representative of his late sister and late trustee had retired from business to a villa at Clapton, he betook himself to the square, solid, brick mansion by the road-side, which a small court-yard enclosed with gates, and flanked on one side by coach-houses and the other by stables, qualified as a country-house. There was a sturdy look about the place which bore no auspicious promise to the applicant.

It may be observed, in general, that persons sufficiently independent in mind to run counter to received opinions in so grave a matter as religion by law established, are rarely subjugated by the minor conventions of society;—and John Heaphy, accordingly, from the crown of his trencher hat to the sole of his silver-buckled shoe, defied the customs of the times. Barnsley discerned, after five minutes spent in his presence, that it would be no easy matter to cajole him out of his opinions, and that his opinions were likely to be those of a man well to do in the world, but ambitious of doing better in the world to come. His uncle's shuffling apologies for his voluntary alienation from his kith and kin, were received with undisguised contempt.

'It has long been my desire,' Barnsley began, 'to renew my intercourse with the surviving members of your family. A coolness, my dear Sir, most unluckily arose between your father and myself. The late Mr. Heaphy, you must admit, had his peculiarities—'

'My father was a fair-dealing tradesman, and a believing Christian,' replied the nephew stoutly.

'My poor brother-in-law looked upon *my* religious principles as unorthodox; and—'

'You are in error,' interrupted John.

'In error? Believe me, I shall be most happy to find myself mistaken!'

'My father considered you devoid of principles of any sort or kind.'

'Mr. Heaphy!'

'An opinion in which I am myself confirmed, by the tenour of your public and private life.'

'If you take things in *this* tone,' cried Barnsley, rising to depart, 'it is impossible for our interview to continue.'

'It was none of my seeking,' observed John Heaphy, wholly unperturbed by the petulance of his kinsman.

'It is easy to perceive the miserable degradation to which I am fallen,' cried Barnsley, with bitterness, 'since even my nearest relatives permit themselves to treat me with contempt!'

'Your reproach does not hit my conscience!' replied John Heaphy, without moving a muscle; 'you cannot tax me with having fawned upon your fortune, and I cannot tax myself with being influenced by your humbled condition. I know nothing about you. When I noticed in the Gazette the election of my mother's brother to be a member of parliament, it moved me no more than when I afterwards saw him gazetted as a bankrupt.'

'The latter qualification ought, at least, to secure me the forbearance which Christian mercy assigns to the unfortunate,' said Barnsley, in a deprecating tone.

'If you are in bodily need, Mr. Barnsley,' said John Heaphy, feeling for his purse, 'I am happy to—'

'Sir,—I did not come here to ask alms!' cried Barnsley, almost at the end of his patience. 'My object is to request your co-operation in a matter of business that involves my remaining property and the interests of my only daughter.'

'To a matter of business I am bound to give my attention,' replied Heaphy, as drily as before. 'Be seated. I am at your service.'

Replacing himself, therefore, in the hard horse-hair arm-chair he had pushed aside, Barnsley commenced a recital of his wrongs, of the nature of the trust securing Stokeshill, and the eligibility of the occasion that presented itself for disposing of the property.

'I was not even aware of the trusteeship, and I know of no authority empowering me to effect any sale thereof,' replied John.

'You have a trustee's discretionary power to administer the property in trust to the best advantage.'

'My discretion, then, suggests that a landed investment is the safest of all investments.'

'But if I can prove that the money offered is five thousand pounds above the *bonâ-fide* value?'

'My conscience would then suggest that I have no right to accept it.'

'Sir,—the offer was voluntary. *I* made no proposals to the bidder.'

'You can have no objection to wait, then, till my cousin attains her majority.'

'The very greatest. It will then be too late. Sir Henry Woodgate is about to marry; he wants to settle at once at Stokeshill Place. Three years hence, with the cares of a family on his shoulders, his enthusiasm will be sobered down, and any other house might suit him as well.'

'And any other purchaser, *you!*'

'No other purchaser will offer half so much. Stokeshill has an imaginary value in Woodgate's eyes. He is willing to give a fancy price for it. He is passionately attached to the place.'

'So, perhaps, may be my cousin Margaret.'

'And if she were,—to what purpose her partiality? When the estate was settled on the late Mrs. Barnsley and her children, I was in possession of five thousand a-year, entitling them to reside there. I have now not a guinea left to support my daughter. If Stokeshill remain unlet (and it has few attractions to a tenant), she must starve; whereas, this money, safely invested, will yield her a provision of fifteen hundred a-year. I appeal to you, Mr. Heaphy, not as my nephew, but as an equitable man, whether a trustee has a right to neglect such an opportunity.'

'As an equitable man, I should say not. But the iniquities of the human race, Mr. Barnsley, have rendered it necessary to involve them in a web of laws, which, in order to impede the knaveries of the rogue, afford obstacles to the movements of the upright man. I have law, Sir, to consult as much as equity. Have you brought with you any written items of these matters, for my consideration?'

'My solicitor, Mr. Fagg, will lay them before your man of business.'

'Sir, I am my own man of business.'

(Barnsley secretly reverted to the maxim that the man who is his own lawyer, has a fool for his client.)

'It will be necessary for me also to examine the deed of trust.'

'There is nothing peculiar in the wording. It contains the customary clauses. It is like all other trusts.'

'I never knew two trusts conceived in exactly a similar spirit. But there is probably a draught of the same among the papers of my late father.'

'You can examine; but I rather imagine not. The settlement was amicable and voluntary on my part; a mere family arrangement.'

'You will have no objection, then, to remit the original document for my perusal?'

'I have it in my pocket,' cried John Barnsley, bringing forth a parchment, not much more bulky than the documents he was in the habit of stowing about his person.

'Then why not produce it at first?'—demanded his nephew.

'I was not aware you were disposed to give your attention to so lengthy a deed.'

'You must have thought me an idiot, Sir, to act upon it without examination,' retorted Heaphy. And ceremoniously adjusting his spectacles, while Barnsley, with almost professional alacrity unfolded the crackling parchment on the old-fashioned, well-rubbed mahogany table; proceeding to recite aloud, and follow with his finger under the nose of his nephew, the various clauses of the trust; insisting especially on one which authorised, under the sanction of the trustees, the sale of the estate; while at every legal recapitulation of the rights and grandeurs of Stokeshill Place, a contemptuous grunt escaped the lips of the ex-linen draper.

'Well, Sir?' demanded Barnsley, when, having at length reached the seals and signatures, he carefully re-folded the deed and replaced it in his side-pocket, 'what conclusions have you come to?'

'That as administrator to the late James Heaphy, and trustee for your daughter, I have no power to refuse my co-operation in the disposal of the estate. But it is clearly my duty to wait till your daughter is at years of discretion.'

'Then we must wait in the workhouse.'

'So far as my small means may enable me, I——'

'Mr. Heaphy, I told you before that I did not come hither to beg.'

'No! you came hither to dictate!'

'Provided Sir Henry Woodgate's solicitors are satisfied with the title, are you willing to come forward?'

'I must first see Miss Margaret Barnsley.'

'Whenever it suits you to make an appointment for receiving her.'

'Sir, my house is not a lawyer's chambers.'

'Whenever it will suit you, then, to meet us in Lincoln's Inn.'

Such and such like were the difficulties with which Mr. Barnsley had to contend in his negociations with his nephew. But John Heaphy was one of those whose bark is fiercer than their bite; and his surliness, like that of many another Samson, waxed mild as May under petticoat government. Fortunately, his legitimate Delilah was a kind-hearted motherly woman, who looked upon Margaret Barnsley's case as though it had been that of her own Kitty or Jane; and she at last succeeded in persuading her husband that it would be merciful, after ascertaining his cousin's acquiescence, to authorise the sale. It was to hasten the interview demanded, that Barnsley had hurried down to Westerton to fetch Margaret to town; and his unwillingness to acquaint her with the importance of her decision on the occasion, alone prevented his laying his situation at once fairly before her. Preassured that on appealing to her in presence of the trustees she would acquiesce in all his propositions, he had already proceeded so far as to signify to Sir Henry Woodgate their acceptance of his offer.

CHAPTER XXXV.

'Business before pleasure' is a golden rule which most of us regard as iron. But Barnsley, extending the canon, chose that business should precede not only the pleasures, but even the affections of life. He considered it a wonderful concession to allow four days to Margaret for preparing to quit Stokeshill for ever; conceiving that it would be just as easy for her to part from the home of her youth, as to doff aside her excellent preceptress, or pack up her trunk.

It is true that Margaret 'added the night unto the day,

and so filled up the measure;' for she rarely closed her eyes in sleep; and during the remainder of the day on which, having installed Miss Winston in her mean lodging in Westerton, she took leave of her on the threshold, scarcely refrained from weeping. The preceding day they had visited the village together, to bid adieu to their *protégés*, and receive in return the humble farewell of the poor. It seemed, indeed, a relief to the grateful people, to know that the discarded governess was to settle so near them, and that through *her*, they should still hear of their benefactress; while the children plucked Margaret by the gown, and offered her flowers from their gardens,—the old their blessings,—the pauper his prayers;—scanty gifts, but in price above rubies to a heart shrinking from the harshness of civilised life! At length came the still more painful parting from her venerated friend; and nothing but a bitter rebuke from her father on the ingratitude towards himself implied by her agony of grief, imposed a restraint upon her sorrow.

And now it was her last day at Stokeshill! The Place, freed from the intrusion of the sheriff's officers, already stood there, an empty shell,—a monument of better days, inhabited only by the gardener and his family. Her father was away, giving orders at the farm, and an audience to the overseers over whom his authority was still unabdicated; when Margaret, heart-sick and hopeless, took her way to the house. She visited every chamber; she paused on every spot endeared by reminiscences of the innocent pastimes of her youth; the chamber which had gone by her mother's name,—the window from which she had been accustomed to watch every evening for her father's return. Firm and collected, she bade adieu to the spot where her good old friend had first instructed her to fold her little hands in prayer; then, with a deep, deep sigh, went her way for ever out of the house. Unconsciously she wandered into the flower-garden. There had been a few days of mild November weather, such as serves to entice up the gentianella, auricula, and violet, under shelter of the fallen leaves. The winter chrysanthemums were blooming of every hue; and among them, the ever-blowing China rose and rose of all seasons. There was a feeling of bewilderment in her mind, as she seated herself on the bench beside her favourite oak tree, to

muse for the last time over a spot in which she had mused so often. Already the scene was peopled to her imagination with new inhabitants. She beheld Helen (not Sullivan, but Woodgate) sweeping majestically under those ancient shades. She saw young children sporting on that level lawn. She saw happiness, love, prosperity, restored to Stokeshill! It was only the name of Barnsley that was stricken out of its records!

But it was not to indulge in such reflections she was there. Margaret, in the tenderness of her heart, had appropriated to herself a last duty; and having taken up from a favourite parterre some roses planted by her own hand, carried them to the secluded churchyard which divided the lawns of Stokeshill Place from the adjoining village; and Bernard Smith, whose eyes watched wistfully from afar the movements of his young lady, presumed not to come forward and offer his aid. He saw her carefully replant the roses close to the church, beneath an ancient yew-tree, under which was visible the small iron grating opening to the vault where her mother was buried; while a third, which at first lay forgotten on the earth, she placed beside the long-neglected grave of the unfortunate lover of Agnes Woodgate; and the old sexton who, on perceiving her, came up to tender his assistance, undertook, at her request, to take care of the trees after she should have quitted Stokeshill. For a moment, Margaret loitered at the stile of the churchyard, her mind thrilling with unutterable thoughts; but when at length she tore herself from the spot and approached Mrs. Molyneux's cottage, she saw that her father was waiting for her, and that it was no time for the indulgence of her feelings. She dried up her tears. She tried to smile when he accosted her; and her smile was almost as mournful as the wandering ray of late autumnal sunshine, which at that moment was shedding its pallid glories upon Stokeshill.

She now longed only for the last parting to be over. But such is the inconsistency of human nature that, the following night, when she laid down her aching head on the stifling pillow of an obscure hotel in London, isolated from everything and everybody that was dear to her, the poor girl felt it would be enough for her consolation to breathe once more the air of Stokeshill.

Even the hotel, however, was an unauthorised luxury.

Barnsley represented the necessity of an immediate removal to lodgings; and in the course of the day they were settled in a 'genteel first floor,' where they were to be 'done for' by the maid of all work of the house. Barnsley had his own views to accomplish in this studied penuriousness. So miserable a predicament could not fail to appeal forcibly to the compassion of his nephew; for their position must remain unamended, unless he coalesced in the sale of Stokeshill. He congratulated his daughter, indeed, that none of her fine London friends were in town at that season of the year, to be shocked by the alteration of their circumstances; but Margaret scarcely heeded the hint. It was not of her fine London friends she was thinking; it was of the good woman who was sitting lonely beside her scanty fire at Westerton. It was of the two who were now all in all to each other, and to one of whom she had so lately fancied herself all in all.

Meanwhile, by much urgency of persuasion, Barnsley contrived that the interview between Heaphy and his cousin should take place the following day; and if Margaret was startled by the straightforward abruptness of her newly-found relative, sturdy John was scarcely less impressed by the beauty and serene depression of Miss Barnsley. He had seen her name noticed by the newspapers of the preceding spring, as a haunter of vain and frivolous resorts, and expected to find in her a 'flaunting Frenchified miss,' consonant with his misconceived notions of the gay duchesses and vain countesses of the great world; and to behold her so mild, so fair, so humble, so natural, touched him with contrition. She bore, too, a strong resemblance to her mother; and Heaphy, amid all his worldly and spiritual pride, retained an affectionate recollection of the pale melancholy aunt John, who, as a bride, had bestowed toys and sweetmeats on his childhood. His heart yearned towards her daughter; and after receiving from the lips of Margaret a reiterated assurance that the projected sale of Stokeshill Place had her full and eager concurrence, he felt inclined to withdraw his opposition.

Margaret was in fact not only earnest in supporting a plan which her father had traced as the sole means of emerging from his difficulties, but desirous to forward the wishes of

the Woodgates. She saw that the comfort of their life lay at her mercy, and hastened to atone for her momentary desire that a single bitter drop might rankle in their golden chalice, in return for the vinegar and hyssop they had presented to her persecuted lips.

'I suppose,' quoth John Heaphy, with a grim smile, after having received from her, in writing, a declaration of her wishes, 'I suppose, then, I must risk my consent? trusting to your conscience, young lady, not to turn upon me hereafter, should funded property fall in value, or a hankering come over your mind after the abode of your young days.'

'No fear, no fear,' cried Barnsley; and Margaret patiently and faintly echoed, 'No fear.'

'Can't say much for your accommodation here,' observed John Heaphy, taking up his trencher hat and umbrella. 'You are but poorly put up. Suppose, Miss Margaret, now the ice is broke a bit between us, you was to come and bide with my family while your father's affairs are on the settle? We don't pretend to grandeur; we don't keep company with lords; but a warm fireside, a plain table, and the best offices of Mrs. H. (as good a woman, though I say it, as ever broke bread), are at your service.'

Margaret, with mechanical thanks, assured him that it was impossible for her to leave her father.

'*Why* impossible?' cried Barnsley. 'You ought to be aware, my dear, that you are just now very much in my way. The life I am forced to lead leaves you unprotected here in lodgings; whereas, if you were safe at your cousin's (since he is so obliging as to be troubled with you), I should live at a coffee-house, and dispatch my business more expeditiously.'

'You had best accept,' said John Heaphy, stretching out his rough hand cordially to the dispirited girl; and noticing, amid all his own want of polish, the coarseness of mind of his uncle.

'Yes, yes, she accepts!' cried Barnsley, regarding the occasion as highly favourable for the propitiation of the sturdy trustee. And Heaphy promised that his good woman would come and fetch her cousin on the morrow.

'Already,' thought poor Margaret, after his departure, 'my father is beginning to throw me off! Instead of allow-

ing me to cheer his comfortless abode, he seems resolved to make the worst of everything.' Still, though grieved to be driven away by her father, there was something cheering in the idea of female companionship. Mrs. John Heaphy would probably turn out vulgar and disagreeable, but she was the mother and mistress of a family; and Margaret recoiled from the necessity of living wholly amongst men.

A bright contrast to all these miseries, meanwhile, was afforded by the scene at Buckhurst Lodge. November, so dull, so dispiriting, so all but insupportable in London, is gladdened in the country by jovial hospitality and the sudden display of scarlet jackets; while the weather, which sits heavily upon the soul of the citizen, lends elasticity to the frame of the sportsman. The Duke of Grantville's establishment, reduced to torpor from March till September, was ever at its brightest after the first frost, which brought woodcocks to his preserves, and drove foxes out of his coverts; and at this present season the arrows of Cupid were almost as active at Buckhurst as the double barrels of Nock and Manton. Lord and Lady Buckhurst were hourly expected home from their bridal excursion, and the marriage of Sir Henry Woodgate with Helen Sullivan awaited only the signature of the writings for the transfer of Stokeshill Place. John Sullivan, Brereton Sullivan, and Lady Margaret, too, were of the party: and the prosperity of her children seemed to infuse new life into Mrs. Sullivan. While her sister, the Duchess, triumphed in the triumph of homœopathy, Helen attributed all to her mother's satisfaction in her prospects.

The hard heart of old Sullivan might have melted, could he have viewed from his grave the elevation of his children upon the neck of the man he abhorred. Barnsley, so lately their equal, was now precipitated into the utmost depths of humiliation. While *they* continued to be served by liveried menials upon glittering plate; while they had chariots and horsemen at command, and the noblest in the kingdom for their mates, Barnsley was trudging through the mud from a meeting of his creditors in Basinghall Street to his solitary mutton-chop at Slaughter's Coffee-House, and thence to his smoky lodgings. So wags the world! Wreck and ruin on one side, triumph and exultation on the other; and how

rarely, to soften the distance between, that genial spirit of humanity—the divinest of all Christian inculcations!

'To be sure, how strangely things do come about,' cried the silly little bride of Lord Buckhurst to Miss Sullivan, as they were sorting silks and lambswool together for the Duchess's carpet-work. 'Who ever would have dreamed, when we were all so cosy together at Wynnex last year, that within twelve months those Barnsleys would be done up, you in possession of that poor girl's home, and I of her lover (for you know Buckhurst certainly *did* admire her—not that it ever went to the lengths people said—but he certainly *was* fond of flirting with her)? And then your brother, of whom my cousin Lu thought herself so sure, married to my sister-in-law; and poor Shoreham, who was thought such a fine independent young gentleman, tied to Lady Catalpa's apron-string.'

'Strange changes, I admit,' replied Helen; 'and I am sorry for Margaret Barnsley. Margaret has too slight a character to suffer deeply; but it is hard to be lifted, as she was, out of her sphere, only to be dashed to pieces, like the tortoise in the fable, borne by eagles through the air.'

'I wonder what is to become of her?' said Flora, yawning. 'Will she be obliged to go out as governess? She was a tolerably good musician. Do you remember how she used to overpower our barcarolles with Handel and thorough-bass, just like an organist in petticoats? How horrid it would be if we have to fall in with her, teaching little girls their notes and A B C, in some family of our acquaintance!'

'I fancy we have nothing to fear on that score,' said Helen, calmly. 'Stokeshill Place was settled upon her; and the large sum we are now paying for it will be Margaret's fortune.'

'Why she will be a *parti* still, then? Who knows? Perhaps (if my aunt Shoreham can spare him), your brother Edward may propose to her again?'

'I am under no apprehensions that Edward will marry either one of the Drewes or Margaret Barnsley.'

'Don't speak so scornfully, my dear. There is no calculating upon the vagrant inclinations of mankind. I can

tell you, that even your grim lord and master (as he won't arrive from town till Tuesday, I may venture to tell tales of him) was laying as close a siege this year in town to the attorney's daughter as if Mr. Barnsley had been Duke of Northumberland.'

'Allowing as close a siege to be laid to him, perhaps,' replied Miss Sullivan, with a contemptuous smile. 'But even that I admit to have been wrong.'

'No such thing, my dear! I met them, you know, night after night, and I never saw a more decided case. Lady Walmer was always complaining that she could not keep the man out of her opera-box; she declared he used to perch there, looking as glum as a raven—a perfect kill-joy!'

Miss Sullivan, disdaining to vindicate Woodgate by informing the young Marchioness of his previous engagement to herself, was under the necessity of hearing on, and far more than was agreeable to her.

'With all one's respect and regard for Sir Henry Woodgate,' persisted Flora, 'he certainly is no great things in the way of pleasantness in general society; and I assure you people used to invite and put up with him chiefly in compliment to his supposed love for Miss Barnsley, who (thanks to Lady Walmer's puffing) was positively the rage.'

'Put up with Sir Henry Woodgate in compliment to Miss Barnsley!' cried Helen, almost off her guard.

'I don't mean to tell you that he ever meant to marry her; but that he was desperately in love was evident to the whole of London; and as he had command over himself to make so great a sacrifice to his pride, I am glad he has been so richly rewarded,' said Flora, in a complimentary strain; 'more particularly, my dear Helen, as you will touch him up, which he sadly wants. Buckhurst was saying yesterday, that all Woodgate required was a rough-rider like yourself; and he hoped you would not spare either curb or spur.'

'I am obliged to Lord Buckhurst's civility,' said Helen, with *hauteur*. 'At least he will own that upon him I was never tempted to make trial of my skill.'

'Don't be affronted, my dear coz,' exclaimed the giddy bride; 'I assure you poor Buckhurst meant it all in good part. Only you know he was always horridly afraid of you,

because the Duchess and your mother wanted to make up a match between you. And as to Woodgate's fickleness now he has once made up his mind, no doubt he will be the most faithful shepherd in the kingdom; more particularly as I am told poor Margaret Barnsley is going out of it.

This conversation, the result of mere levity on the part of the young Marchioness, who, if she had not talked nonsense must have remained silent, did not dispose Helen Sullivan to receive with indulgence the warm encomiums with which, on his arrival at Buckhurst, her intended bridegroom alluded to the conduct of Margaret. Barnsley, with his usual want of tact, had contrived to bring about an interview between them previously to his daughter's departure for Clapton; and Woodgate could scarcely do justice to his admiration of the mild and feminine demeanour of Margaret in her misfortunes. His sympathy was in every way excited. Much as he had detested the Barnsleys as his supersedes at Stokeshill, he contemplated them with pity when driven forth into banishment; attributing to the attorney the same local attachments long cherished by himself. He knew, too, that Margaret had been eager to forward his purchase of Stokeshill by the cession of her own rights; and when, having been forced into her presence by her father, he found her sitting cold and pale as marble in her solitary abode, the beautiful regularity of her countenance rendered still more apparent by the absence of all colour and all ornament, he thought her far lovelier than when shining, the observed of all observers, the cynosure of Almack's. It was, perhaps, because her touching humility had so completely fascinated his imagination, that on reaching Norfolk he discerned, for the first time, in the lady of his thoughts a certain loftiness of demeanour almost amounting to *hauteur;* something of her father's self-importance, vivified by the radiance of youth and beauty.

This expression was in fact more than usually disclosed in the countenance of Helen. The most sympathetic marriages are prefaced by that most antipathetic of antecedents, a settlement, by which Westminster Hall and all its wigs are arrayed for the discomfiture of Cupid. Certain covenants had been required by the solicitor of the Sullivans, concerning which Helen understood and cared not the

scrape of a pen, which were peremptorily declined by the solicitors of Sir Henry Woodgate, who valued not their objections a grain of pounce. But Mr. Sullivan Brereton Sullivan, having been at the pains to explain to his sister, in some of his lengthiest phrases, that her rights were at stake, and that by ceding to the exactions of Woodgate, her family would evince an unbecoming eagerness for the match, Helen readily consented to uphold the propositions of the lawyers.

Sir Henry Woodgate, meanwhile, admonished on his side that the Sullivans, by claiming more than their due, marked their consciousness of the obligation under which he was placing himself by the appropriation of part of his wife's fortune to the purchase of Stokeshill, replied to the savages of Gray's Inn, that by half-an-hour's conversation with Miss Sullivan, he would undertake to settle the business. He spoke with confidence, for with confidence did he feel; and great was his amazement and disappointment when, on broaching the subject, he found Miss Sullivan adhere to the demands of the solicitors with the most unflinching pertinacity. Her inferiority on this point to the disinterestedness he had so recently seen, not professed, but practised, by the humbly-born Margaret Barnsley, startled as much as it displeased him.

For the first time he began to notice that Helen was disputatious. Educated with brothers of whom she was fully the equal in capacity, she was accustomed to maintain her point till it was logically overthrown; unconscious or regardless that a woman who has always a reason to give and chooses to give it, however much in the right, is in the wrong:—no accomplishment of womankind being more amiable in the eyes of their lords and masters, than that of knowing when and how to submit to defeat.

Miss Sullivan was perhaps partly piqued into this assumption of superiority by the presence of the two brides, Lady Buckhurst and Lady Margaret Brereton, over whom her brother and cousin exercised a sort of half ironical marital authority; and she chose to show Sir Henry Woodgate at once, that *she* should submit to no such degradation; but still more probably to her unacknowledged jealousy of Margaret Barnsley. She regarded Margaret as the most

poor-spirited of her sex; and when she heard Sir Henry deliberately avow his admiration of the tame resignation of the attorney's daughter, her own high spirit rose fifty degrees in altitude.

There was another cause of dissension, which jarred more painfully on his feelings than all the rest. In the early days of their engagement, Helen had appeared to sanction his invitation to aunt Agnes, to make his home her own, to eat of his bread and drink of his cup, as she was only too well entitled. But now, without any positive declaration of an alteration in her views, Helen evidently considered the measure as provisional; that Miss Woodgate was to become a guest, not an inmate. It was natural, perhaps, that some sort of misgiving should exist, unacquainted as she was with the mind and manners of his aunt. But Margaret Barnsley had taken the virtues of Agnes upon trust. Margaret Barnsley had loved her unseen, unknown; estimating the nobleness of her character by her conduct towards himself. Here was, indeed, a bitter source of disappointment! Miss Sullivan seemed to consider Stokeshill Place an eligible purchase only on account of its proximity to Hawkhurst Hill; and while he was not only willing but desirous to render it the happiest of abodes to poor Mrs. Sullivan, his bride was for qualifying as a visitor the relative to whom he absolutely owed a home!

But these differences of opinion between the lovers passed wholly unobserved by the gay party at Buckhurst Lodge. The younger couples were too self-engrossed to take heed of them; except when the giddy Flora rallied Helen on her prudery in renouncing *tête-à-tête* walks and drives with one who was so soon to be her husband, while the humdrum Duke and Duchess lauded the propriety of her conduct. The gentlemen thought of nothing but their daily sport; the ladies sang trios, played duets, or stitched Berlin work,—laughing loud, without having much to laugh at,—and talking incessantly without having much to talk about. They formed, in short, a very happy family party.

The course of their own true love had run so smooth, that they fancied most other marriages were arranged in the same matter-of-course sort of way, and left the lovers and the lawyers to settle all dilemmas of their own creation.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MARGARET had scarcely recovered the shock of her unexpected interview with Sir Henry Woodgate, when she found herself transferred to the domicile of her uncouth kindred; and the cordiality of their reception served only to place in painful contrast the indifference with which her father had witnessed her departure. Never had the Heaphys welcomed any one so fair and graceful to their homely abode; and humbled as Margaret was, she commanded commiseration of their kindly hearts.

Ever since the death of his father and mother, fifteen years before, Stokeshill Place and its inmates had formed a favourite topic of denunciation to John Heaphy. Barnsley, his uncle and godfather, he regarded as one who was living the life, and would die the death of the wicked; having forgôt his own people and his father's house, to resign himself to the delusions of sin and Satan; and when having married a wife of his own degree, Heaphy retired from trade to the *otium cum dignitate* of Clapton, his sentiments towards his uncle were gradually instilled into the partner of his destinies, and the children born to them. When at length, after sitting with senators and consorting with countesses, uncle Barnsley was gazetted a bankrupt, instead of, as they had anticipated, a baronet, long and solemn was the exhortation recited by the parents to their children, upon the predestined fall of pride.

But scarcely had the Heaphys, old or young, looked upon cousin Margaret, when their animosities subsided. Her sweet face, saddened by suffering, exercised a miraculous charm. Three or four Heaphy girls, with straight hair, narrow shoulders and wide mouths, short white sleeves and long red arms, soon clustered familiarly round her, eager to please and be pleased. Sturdy John, after thanking her for coming, bade her not feel herself a stranger among those of her own flesh and blood; and what gratified her more than all, and served to prove a long-existing tie between her and her quaint-looking cousin, was his inquiry after 'the good little body of a governess, who had brought up her poor mother who was dead and gone, and to whom her poor

mother had been so partial;' while, on the other hand, John Heaphy was disposed to form a better opinion of uncle Barnsley, on learning that the good little body had been retained in his establishment to preside over the education of his daughter.

To relate the forlorn situation of her regretted friend to the sympathy of such warm-hearted people, was a comfort to Margaret. Mrs. Heaphy's 'Poor soul! Heaven help her!' was too genuine to be mistrusted; although her half-doubting interrogatory to her husband, whether the services of such a woman might not be worth thinking of for the girls, (whose diet of roast mutton and Pinnock, though profiting them much, left ample space for the refinements of life,) was happily negatived.

Margaret was soon reconciled to the peculiarities of her cousin, by hearing from him, for the first time in her life, a description of her mother. John Heaphy was pleased to recur to the days of his youth,—the brilliant marriage of his uncle,—and the girlish gentleness of the bride. He spoke without shame of his grandfather, old John Barnsley, the retired law-stationer; of his own father, the linen-draper, and of a rich uncle-in-law, a ship-master at Mile End. *These* were the *nobles* of his race; others were incidentally alluded to of inferior pretensions, such as Ephraim Barnsley, in the slop-selling line; and Sally Heaphy, who kept a snuff-stall in Exeter Change. To all this, Margaret listened with amazement. She now discerned the motives of her father's reserve; and appreciated the vast stride he had taken after the purchase of Stokeshill Place; and his indiscretion in consorting exclusively with lords and landed esquires, and comporting himself as of their own degree. The fates had set all right again. The fates had preserved the pride of Sir Henry Woodgate from calling cousins with the keeper of a snuff-shop in Exeter Change!

In process of time, the Heaphys were amazed in their turn when, on referring to various political movements of the day, they discovered that Margaret had been on a footing of familiar intercourse with those whom they regarded as the demi-gods of fame; and sturdy John did homage to a distinction that vaunted not itself, but was drawn forth by the common course of conversation. He

was one of that peculiar class of the easy-circumstance order of Englishmen, who read nothing but the Holy Scriptures and the unholy newspapers; and by dint of reading them every day, and all day long, attain a very sufficient degree of enlightenment. Between parliamentary reports and law reports, the money markets and foreign intelligence, great letters and small, he managed to know all that had been passing in the world for the last twenty years, from the Black Sea to Rosamond's Pond; and with a mind unencumbered by any other species of literature, his memory was tenacious of trivialities such as public men fondly believe to be effaced from private recollection! Not an inconsistency in any official career, but was noted down in the tablets of John Heaphy's brain. Chancellors might have stood reproved by his reminiscences, and lords of the Treasury brought to the blush. Margaret was somewhat amused, indeed, on perceiving how completely at variance was his unsophisticated beau-ideal of certain eminent men, from the realities she had seen lounging in Lady Walmer's opera-box. But she would not undeceive him. If John Heaphy chose to ground his conjectures of modern Downing Street upon his grammar-school experience of Plutarch's Lives, why diminish his reverence for those through whom, he humbly hoped, would decrease his assessed taxes, and the price of dry goods and tobaccos?

Her father would have been less forbearing! But though John Heaphy's board was every day handsomely spread, Barnsley was never invited to sit there as a guest. His nephew evidently did not choose him to partake of his bread and salt. On this, and other accounts, indeed, Margaret found Clapton an uneasy residence; but whenever, in the course of the hurried morning visits he paid his daughter, the question of her return to town was agitated, Mr. Barnsley closed so eagerly with the cordial proposal of the Heaphys that she should remain there a few more weeks, that resistance was impossible. Her visit was a happy incident in the monotonous existence of her worthy cousins. Her conversation cheered their fireside, while her deportment reformed the clumsiness of their girls; and they were as glad to secure, as Barnsley to dispense with, her company. He declared himself overwhelmed with business, but was

sanguine that, all would be settled before the meeting of parliament. The sudden death of his partner, friend, and enemy, Closeman, threatened somewhat to delay the settlement of his bankruptcy accounts; but the purchase money of Stokeshill was about to be paid into the hands of his banker, the brother of Fagg, his solicitor, who was to share with Mr. Heaphy the trusteeship for the property of the minor.

'If your uncle Clement had been in England, *he* would have been the properest person,' observed John, after the visit in which his uncle communicated this intelligence. 'That is, if he had chosen to act. The Colonel has not kept up any intercourse with your father these two years past. The Colonel felt huffy at some sort of slight his brother thought fit to show to a gentleman he wrote to introduce to him. He has often inquired what sort of a young woman you were growing up. The Colonel's getting in years, Margaret; and he'll be glad to find a niece waiting for him in England, not too fine a lady to settle his gouty cradle and nightcap.'

John Heaphy's admiration of Margaret's simplicity of character was soon a thousand-fold increased. One day, as she sat working in the dull, dingy drawing-room, whose very firescreens (those chartered libertines of foppery) consisted of an octagon of lead-coloured pasteboard, mounted on an ebony handle; her thoughts far away,—at Westerton—at Stokeshill—at home; while Mrs. Heaphy was superintending the well-thumbed spelling-book of a good-humoured fat little girl, too learned for the nursery, and too noisy for the school-room, a loud ring at the gate-bell aroused them to the prospect of a visitor. When, to Margaret's utter horror, a card bearing the name of Lady Woodgate was placed in her hand, with an inquiry whether 'she would please to see the lady?'

Such was her first intimation of the existence of a Lady Woodgate! The newspaper paragraph, announcing the marriage, had never happened to meet her eye; and in one of her father's recent visits, he had casually mentioned that there was some hitch in Woodgate's settlements which would postpone, and might eventually break off the match. Nay, one of those mysterious announcements thrown out,

like blue lights in a fog, by the morning papers, in the month of November, to render the dulness of the season more lugubrious:—'We understand that a certain illustrious family has been perplexed by a misunderstanding likely to frustrate the projected hymeneal festivities that were about to celebrate the marriage of one of its fair members with a Baronet of ancient family,' seemed so directly to point at Helen Sullivan and Woodgate, that Margaret dreamed not the same paragraph had served to enliven the interest of the same dull columns, during the last thirty years.

But the marriage was actually solemnised! Lady Woodgate's carriage was at the gate, and her card in her hand; and Margaret's eyes remained fixed upon it as if her senses were forsaking her.

'Thomas is asking you, my dear cousin, whether you will see the lady?' demanded Mrs. Heaphy, sticking her indicatorial pin into Clemmy's spelling-book, after the footboy had for the third time repeated his message.

The conventional equivocation of 'Not at home,' rose to the lips of one who had passed a whole season in May Fair; but Margaret, aware that she was now the inmate of a house where no lies were accounted white, checked herself, and desired, with a despairing face, that Lady Woodgate might be shown up.

'Do not leave the room; you will do me a very great favour by remaining,' she exclaimed, perceiving that the considerate Mrs. Heaphy was about to remove the child and spelling-book into the adjoining study.

'I had better go, my dear,' cried Mrs. H., gathering up in a bustle from the hearth-rug some dusters she had been preparing for marking-ink.

'No—no,—pray stay!' repeated Margaret, trembling so violently that she could not rise from her chair.

'But my Lady may have business to talk about.—Woodgate, I think, is the name of the family who have bought your father's country-seat?'

'Yes—no,—it is of no consequence,' faltered Margaret. 'But if you wish to show me real kindness, do not leave me a moment alone with her.'

Mrs. Heaphy, amazed by a degree of emotion she had

never before seen disturb the serenity of Margaret, instantly prepared to comply. She satisfied her sense of propriety however, by dismissing poor Clemmy; whom she hurried out of the room with the bundle of dusters in her fat little arms; just in time to run against the stately figure of Lady Woodgate, as she entered the room.

Margaret advanced to meet her, and receive upon her cold cheek the salutation of other times, still mechanically tendered. After a formal introduction to 'my cousin, Mrs. Heaphy,' they all sat down.

'I am afraid you have had a very cold drive,' said Margaret, taking no heed of the magnificent pelisse of purple velvet and sable, by which the bride was defended against the weather.

'Not *very* cold. Sir Henry came with me the greater part of the way; but knowing we must have much to say to each other, he got out, and walked back to town.'

By this announcement, Helen intended to convey to the stupid cousin a hint to put down her strip of muslin, and take her departure. But Mrs. Heaphy sat unmoved; while Margaret recoiled with bitter anguish. To *her* ear, the words conveyed a boast, a taunt; and the sense of injury roused her courage.

'Have you been long in town?' she inquired, with assumed self-command.

'Only a few days, on our way to Hawkhurst. We are at Escudier's hotel. Mamma will join us in a day or two, when we shall proceed together into Kent.'

'To spend Christmas?' mechanically rejoined Margaret.

'We have no Christmas parties in prospect,' replied Lady Woodgate. 'But it is necessary for us to be on the spot, to superintend the improvements at Stokeshill Place.'

Margaret started. Poor Margaret!—she had fancied that Stokeshill Place needed no improvement!

'Woodgate wishes everything to be finished before we attempt the task of furnishing. Nothing so miserable as having to fly from room to room, before painters and paperhangers: so we pass the winter at Hawkhurst with my brother and Lady Margaret Sullivan.'

'A very fortunate resource for you,' said Margaret

patiently. 'You will be able to overlook everything in person.'

'I shall not interfere. Sir Henry's object is simply to restore the place as nearly as possible to what it was in his grandfather's time. I speak of all this, my dear Margaret, without reserve; for I am aware that it was in accordance with your desire the Place was disposed of; and I am vain enough to think you would rather see it in the hands of old friends, than of strangers.'

Margaret assented with an almost ghastly smile. 'Has Sir Henry Woodgate seen my father since his arrival in town?' she inquired.

'Yes; once or twice, I fancy; though all matters relative to Stokeshill, you know, have been adjusted between them this month past. Our people took possession on the 1st; and no time was lost in commencing their operations. Every day, at this season, is precious. Sir Henry does not intend to have a flower-garden near the house. They are removing it below the hill.'

'The aspect is a better one,' faltered Margaret.

'Mr. Barnsley and my husband had parliamentary business to talk over. There is a report of a dissolution.'

'Indeed!—Thank God!'

'Is it possible that you wish for the disturbance of another election at Westerton?'

'I have little more to see of Westerton, and my father will be set at liberty. We shall be able to leave town,—perhaps England.'

'By the way,' resumed Lady Woodgate, 'I saw Mr. Barnsley for a moment, yesterday; (it was, in fact, from *him* I obtained your address,) and I am concerned to find that circumstances prevent your accepting the little wedding-presents which Woodgate and myself have had the pleasure of offering you.'

Margaret looked perplexed.

'I admit that, if you settle in town, Khaled would be an incumbrance; indeed *that* purchase was altogether an idea of Sir Henry's. But the piano, my dear—the books!—Surely wherever you go, you will want music and books?'

'Not if we go abroad.'

'Ah! you think of going abroad? But, if you *should*

remain in England, Margaret, surely you will oblige us by acceptance?'

'A thousand thanks!—Objects provoking the recollection of Stokeshill, would give me more pain than pleasure!—I am not the less grateful to Sir Henry Woodgate.'

'Do not defraud me of *my* share in your good will, my dear. We are old friends, Margaret, and I trust may long remain so.'

Poor Mrs. Heaphy was of opinion that her cousin was somewhat ungracious in her mode of receiving so many fine presents and fine professions; especially from so grand a lady in so fine a pelisse.

'I trust you left Mrs. Sullivan in better health?' demanded Margaret, to change the conversation.

'Mamma is certainly better; but my aunt thinks she will be as ill as ever when she gets to Hawkhurst. The Duke and Duchess are apt to fancy that no one can live out of Norfolk. By the way, Margaret, you do not ask after Buckhurst and his bride? I am afraid you have not forgiven his rapid recovery from the effects of your cruelty?'

'I take Lord Buckhurst's desertion in as good part as he took my refusal,' said Margaret, trying to speak cheerfully. 'But how does Flora look as a matron? Poor Lord Tynemouth must rejoice at having escaped the martyrdom of balls, by securing a chaperon for Jesse.'

'Chaperon, my dear? Jessie Devereux is going to be married herself. A sad match! Some country clergyman whom nobody ever heard of. But I am neglecting the object of my visit. I sadly want you to return and spend the day with me in town.

'Thank you. It is quite out of the question.'

'I will send you home at night:—you need not put any one out of the way,' said Lady Woodgate, looking spitefully at the tiresome cousin who would not be hinted out of the room.

'You are very kind; but I am not in spirits for any other society than that of my own family.'

'My dear, you must not indulge in low spirits. You have no excuse. *I* consider you very rich, Margaret. How few girls have more than forty thousand pounds!'

'I was not thinking of fortune.'

'You were thinking, perhaps, of your father. But it is no kindness to *him*, Margaret, to mope yourself to death. *Do* come and spend the day with us: I have a thousand things to say to you, and Woodgate is to get us a private box at Drury Lane. Pray assist me to persuade her,' continued Lady Woodgate, turning towards the dummy cousin. Will it not do her good to go to the play?'

'Mrs. Heaphy smiled. 'Not in *my* opinion! Mr. H. and myself have scruples against entering a theatre.'

'Saints!' thought Lady Woodgate, turning again towards Margaret. 'But you, my dear child, have not fallen into these opinions?' said she.

'I should not choose to be seen in a place of public amusement so soon after my father has been declared insolvent.'

'How absurd! Mr. Barnsley is in no kind of *necessity*.'

'It would give me no pleasure to go,' said Margaret, decidedly, almost sternly; and Lady Woodgate was forced to be content.

'Since you will not accompany me to town,' said she, bending forward with a view not to be overheard by Mrs. Heaphy, 'let me speak to you a few minutes alone. I have something important to say.'

'Pray speak,' replied Margaret. 'My cousin, Mrs. Heaphy, is in the confidence of all my affairs.'

'But she is not in those of all the world,' replied Lady Woodgate. 'I want to talk to you about my brother Edward.'

'Anything you can have to say to me from Mr. Edward Sullivan, may, I assure you, be said here.'

'Since it is your pleasure to receive proposals in public, like a queen on her throne,' said Helen, greatly annoyed, 'I must still fulfil my promise to my mother by telling you that Ned has written to her from Paris to feel his way with you. My brother's views, Margaret, are unchanged; he places his hand and fortune once more at your disposal.'

'I assure you—'

'Pause ere you reply!' interrupted Helen. 'Consult your conscience whether you have a right to refuse ten thousand a year and a peerage (for the Chilton business is to be settled next session). Disinterestedness is a fine thing;

but for your father's sake as well as your own, Edward's propositions merit some consideration.'

'They merit my utmost gratitude—but I can give no more,' replied Margaret. 'You are mistaken in supposing *any* marriage I could make would be advantageous to my father. His maintenance depends on our living together, and together we will live.'

'I anticipated your answer!' said Helen, with an air of hauteur. 'I wrote to Edward,—I tried to dissuade my mother from these humiliating overtures; but they insisted. *They* do not understand you, perhaps, so well as I do.'

Again Margaret began to tremble at the idea of being *understood* by Lady Woodgate.

'I have only to regret my fruitless errand, and wish you good morning,' continued Helen, rising.

'Can I offer anything to your Ladyship?' inquired the good-natured Mrs. Heaphy, agreeing with her that it was a dreary expedition to have undertaken for nothing. 'The children are at dinner down stairs, upon a nice shoulder of mutton and batter-pudding.'

Lady Woodgate bowed condescendingly, but was not tempted by dainties which had announced themselves powerfully on the staircase.

'Perhaps Sir Henry's eloquence might be more efficacious?' said she, ironically addressing Margaret. 'Will you give him leave to try his diplomacy in Edward's favour?'

'Do not let Sir Henry have the trouble of coming here,' replied Margaret, firmly. 'Misfortune is apt to render people morose. I make no apology for my incivility; my only desire is not to be misunderstood.'

Lady Woodgate's conscience rebuked her, for she saw big tears gathering under the swollen eyelids of Margaret.

'Let us at all events part in charity,' said she. 'You need not treat me as an enemy because you will not accept me as a sister. Unless you take a kiss of peace at parting, I will carry sad reports of you into Kent. Have you nothing to say to Miss Winston, Margaret? I find, from your father, she is settled at Westerton; and when we get to Stokeshill, I shall make it a point to afford her every countenance in my power.'

'Thank you,' said the poor girl, feeling she had no right

to reject an offer of kindness for one who had so few remaining to be kind. 'I have just finished a purse for her. You would do me a favour by leaving it as you pass through Westerton.' And she stooped over the work-box to make up the little parcel and conceal her tears.

'Good morning, pray do not trouble yourself to ring,' said Lady Woodgate, gliding past Mrs. Heaphy, after having received the packet and adieux of Margaret. And as she traversed the hall below, a whole tribe of little Heaphys rushed forth in their greasy pinafores to stare at 'cousin's visitor,' whom Thomas the footboy had announced to the whole establishment as 'a lady of title.'

'Margaret, my love, you look very pale, you seem very faint!' cried her kind-hearted cousin, as soon as the carriage drove from the gate. 'As sure as life, that fine-lady friend of yours had musk upon her pocket-handkerchief! I thought I perceived it when she whiffed by me.—There! I've set the sash up a bit, and you'll soon be better. Deary me! I'm afraid there's been nobody to see after the poor children all this time at their dinner.'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

If anything could increase the respect in which the daughter of Barnsley was held by John Heaphy, it would have been the knowledge thus acquired, that she had 'sent to the right-about a couple of young chaps of lords, determined in good or evil to abide by her father.'

'Not, however, that I would have you tie yourself down against matrimony,' said Heaphy. 'When the right man comes, it will be no hard matter to make an allowance to your father out of your fortune.'

'An *allowance* from a daughter to a father! You do not think of anything so monstrous!' cried Margaret, the colour rising into her pale cheeks. 'And why speak of *my* fortune? Is not everything I have my father's?'

'Not your money, certainly; or he would have it in enjoyment.'

'It may not be his in *law* perhaps.'

'Neither in law nor equity! As one of the five children

of an honest stationer, John Barnsley got five thousand pounds to his fortune. The rest, (and a fine windfall it was!) was your mother's, every penny of it your mother's; and it would be hard indeed, Margaret, if your father's folly were to strip you of more than the hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds he has chosen to make ducks and drakes of.'

Meanwhile, poor Barnsley's state of feeling was little to be envied. The prognosticated dissolution had actually taken place; and, though a matter of secondary interest at Clapton, not another topic occupied the world of clubs and coffee-houses, of which Barnsley was perforce an inhabitant. Not but that the bitter ashes scattered over his destiny reached him even there. Such members of his club as were unconnected with Kent, knew from that vaguest of whispers, common report, that the Honourable Member for Westerton had been a partner in a country bank (connected with other houses, connected with the hop trade), which had smashed the preceding summer; and these, perceiving the guilty word 'bankrupt' inscribed in his fallen countenance, avoided him as though it were likely to sour their claret or chill their soup; while others, who, after hearing and repeating in the spring that his daughter was likely to become Duchess of Grantville, found that another charmer had been promoted to be Marchioness of Buckhurst, chose to settle it that the Grantvilles had refused their consent; that the disappointed girl had vanished, and was gone no one knew whither, perhaps as governess, perhaps as apprentice, perhaps as heaven knows what. His *quondam* friends now grew very much ashamed of him. In those civilised districts of London, where poverty is a crime and a shabby coat a misdemeanour, Barnsley was as fairly sent to Coventry, as if he had never given a popular ball, or dinners enlivened with magnums of *Clos-de-Vogeot!*

Still, Barnsley wanted the self-respect necessary to confine himself day after day to the solitary lodging, where he heard nothing but the clicking of his landlord's clock and the creaking of his own boots. Though pierced to the soul by the indignities heaped upon him,—the hand withheld, the eye averted, the insolent affability of the vulgar,—he had not courage to flee from the vortex, and hazard an encounter

with himself. All was not sound within. There was nothing consolatory in his reflections. Even in his best actions, instead of following righteousness for righteousness' sake, his virtue had been a well got up comedy, intended to secure him a good standing in the county of Kent. In his worst—but that account was still pending between himself and heaven!

He noted not, indeed, his lack of that kindliness of nature which (like the rays of sunshine that fertilise the earth while they impart geniality to the atmosphere) blesseth even the medium through which it dispenses the beneficence of the Creator to the forlorn of his creatures. Even after suffering persecution, Barnsley had not learned mercy. It is an error to suppose that adversity softens *every* human nature. Adversity perfects the good, but the bad it renders worse; as the vessel of gold is softened by the same furnace which hardens the vessel of clay. Barnsley rebelled against the Providence which chastised him. Looking into his purse rather than into his conscience for the reward of his integrity, and finding it empty, he argued that integrity was little worth; and instead of patiently attempting to root up the tares which, according to the sentence pronounced upon fallen man, were springing amid the good wheat wherewith he had sowed his ground, he cursed the soil with an exceeding great curse, that it might remain blighted and barren for evermore.

Such is usually the philosophy of those whose desires are bounded by the rewards and profits of the world. They examine the mighty struggle between egotism and egotism, whether of nations or individuals, which constitutes the movement of social life; and finding distinctions unworthily conferred, and some profligate adventurer saluted as cousin to the king, proclaim the worthlessness of virtue! Dazzled by the diadem that crowns the brows of the triumphant Lady Macbeth, they overlook those restless hours when never-slumbering remorse stains her right royal hands with imaginary blood!

Barnsley, who had been respected for wealth and was despised for poverty, had some right to feel that the molten calf was still the favourite idol of mankind. But was he also justified in believing that chance had made him rich, that

chance had made him poor; while virtue, so far from availing him, would not so much as purchase a porringer of soup to save him from starvation? Was he justified in asserting that, like the once efficient Milan armour, grown useless in the days of Congreve's rockets and Perkins's guns; or like the simple shells forming a current coin of savage countries, but laid aside in the progress of civilisation,—virtue was obsolete, a thing incompatible with the existence of railroads and exchequer bills?

Yet such was the tacit conviction of the Man of Business! —If he did not openly exclaim, like Milton's Satanic hero,

Evil, be thou my good!

he was secretly of opinion that whereas, in the infancy of society, strength is virtue, after the progress of ages, cunning becomes strength; and that, whether you out-fight or out-wit your antagonist, your superiority must be the same.

The principles which tend to people Newgate with swindlers instead of highwaymen, and to place Prince Talleyrand at the head of modern diplomatists, served to satisfy John Barnsley that since Closeman, by whom he had been defrauded, was protected by the law, *he* ought to be protected in his turn, should an opportunity present itself for reprisal. Nay, when the fashionable newspapers acquainted him that in the course of the season Lord Shoreham had netted a sum of eighty thousand pounds, at Crockford's and on the turf—(eighty thousand pounds to the gambler and horse-jockey, while the painstaking magistrate, the upright senator, was reduced to his last doit,)—he expressed himself somewhat after the tone of Louis XIV, on learning in his latter days the defeat of his army,—'*Dieu a donc oublié tout ce que j'ai fait pour lui!*'

The man who presumed to arraign the justice of his Maker, was not likely to bow to the decrees of his fellow-creatures; and just as the Duc de la Rochefoucault concocted his crabbed maxims against the honesty of mankind, after being baffled in his courtiership and discarded by the Duchesse de Longueville, John Barnsley, defrauded by a banker's clerk, established it as a fact that Diogenes with his lantern might have pushed his inquiring way through the

seven million population of England, without coming to a stand-still.

Every day did he wax more morose—more misanthropic. Against Closeman, it was useless to rail; for the broken-spirited banker of Westerton was gone to give up his account to a higher tribunal than that of Guildhall. But a new subject for denunciation soon presented itself when the worthy and independent electors of Westerton, finding him at present disqualified by his bankruptcy to represent them in parliament, instead of accepting at his hands a stop-gap member to occupy his seat till his docket was taken off, as it was likely to be before the meeting of parliament, actually got up a deputation to solicit the stupid and honourable George Holloway, of Withamstead Hall, to legislate on their behalf in his stead.

This insult was more than he could bear. George Holloway to be the plummet over him;—whose speech on attaining his majority, to a barnful of his father's tenants, had been one of his own earliest acts and inventions after settling in the county of Kent!—George Holloway, whose blunders he had varnished over;—whose sins as a yeomanry captain he had redeemed; whose ineptitude of mind, whose infirmities of body, he had borne with such neighbourly patience! Twenty years long had he been grieved with him; hoarse with shouting to his deaf ears, harassed with particularising to his dull mind. And now, the Hon. George was driving in his phaeton towards the hustings of Westerton, over the mangled remains of his own prostrate fortunes!

'To be sure, there isn't a heavier drag in the kingdom than young Hol. (now old Hol's benched in the House of Humdrums),' said Parson Drewe, when soliciting his nephew's interest for the heir apparent of Withamstead. 'But 'twill be a deuced good thing, you know, to ship the fellow off for town in the middle of the hunting season, for he's such a slow dog; one is always riding over him; and such a deaf post, he can't so much as hear one beg pardon.'

'What are the blockhead's principles?' demanded Lord Shoreham; much in the tone with which the clown demands of Malvolio in the play, 'What are the opinions of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl?'

'Principles!—Oh! *squire* to the back-bone!' cried Alfred

Drewe, jealous of the honour of his *protégé*;—'Corn laws,—Protestant succession,—Magna Charta,—church and state, and all that.'

'I trust the gentleman is faviribly disposed towards Ireland!' lisped the saccharine voice of Lady Catalpa,—an intellectual beauty of a certain age, who deigned to preside over the domestic happiness of the young lord,—sacrificing to him a reputation which was at once very black and very blue.

'Ireland—slave trade—factory children,—Poles,—high, low, Jack, and the game!' cried Alfred.

'Explain yourself less metaphorically, my dear Mr. Drewe, for I fear I am sadly obtuse!' lisped the Countess, playing with a profusion of glittering rings, adorning hands on which ink, or some other stain, had left a very dirty impression. 'Pray, explain yourself!'

'No, by George! I never rise to explain; I leave that to my curate!' cried the Parson. 'But what say you, Shoreham?—Is it a go?' And Alfred began to whistle.

'My dear Mr. Drewe, you forget you are not in the kennel!' said Lady Catalpa, with a tremendous glance, but infinite suavity of tone.

A retort rose to the Parson's lips, which he swallowed, without much difficulty; for the number of affronts he was daily required to digest at the Abbey, rendered him expert in the operation.

'Good morning, Alfred!' added Lord Shoreham. 'Lady Catalpa and I are going to luncheon. By the way, if you are writing to Gus, pray mention that I'm sorry I can't accommodate him with the five hundred, about which he bores me by every post—I'm drained as dry as Bagshot Heath. Let him apply to Baron Nebuchadnezzar Salfiore. He's your man for loans. I'm up to trap. Good morning, Alfred. Look in at the kennel as you go home. In my humble opinion, Blanche wants blistering.—But I leave all that to *you*.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Margaret's thoughts could not be wholly restrained from wandering into Kent. Miss Winston in her correspondence

with her young friend, was wise enough not to abstain from allusion to the Woodgates; she understood too well the magnifying powers of the imagination to envelop their name in mystery; and her letters informed Margaret that instead of fulfilling his intention of passing some months at Hawkhurst, Sir Henry was accelerating the preparations for their instalment at Stokeshill. Several rooms were already furnished; and Mrs. Richard Dobbs, a person who contrived to intrude wherever intruders were most undesirable, circulated, as the result of her peeping, that the wedding presents of the Grantville and Sullivan families to the young couple were magnificent. Miss Winston did not think it necessary to append Mrs. Dobbs' commentary to the text that 'things were about to be done at Stokeshill on a different scale from the poor-spirited style of those Barnsleys; that to the library of carved oak was restored the armorial escutcheons of its groinings; and that although the family pictures of the Woodgates could never again be collected, Miss Agnes had dispatched a fine portrait of old Lady Woodgate in her velvet gown and coif, executed in Flanders, for which the present Lady Woodgate had obtained as companion a magnificent picture of her husband by Lawrence, which made the drawing-room look something like.'

In lieu of this intelligence, Miss Winston merely remarked, 'Lady Woodgate condescended the other day to give me a morning call. She never was a favourite of mine, and I liked her less than usual. Her opinions are too decided, and her manners twenty years in advance of her age. She is already altered for the worse; and as time is apt to confirm faults like hers, I expect that ten years hence she will become a peremptory, disagreeable woman. Nature knew best in bestowing timidity of character upon youth. The progress of time remedies the defect, as it mellows the colours of a picture. My own Margaret, who used sometimes to reproach me with not having overcome her shyness in company, has already acquired becoming self-possession; and by the time she has a daughter old enough to introduce into society, will perhaps attain the point of confidence from which Miss Sullivan started at eighteen.'

Margaret smiled at the affectionate partiality of her

friend; while her fancy readily supplied the details spared her by Miss Winston. She could not help following Helen in her new *ménage*. She could not help tracing her from room to room, from shrubbery to shrubbery; in her own accustomed seat at Stokeshill church, in her own accustomed rounds of charity in Stokeshill village. She fancied her listening impatiently to the bavardage of Nurse Molyneux, and complacently to that of Mrs. Woods, the attendant of little Harry Woodgate. Margaret wondered how soon Agnes would arrive to take her part in the general joy. She wondered what had become of Khaled. She wondered how the new gardens were getting on. But she wondered without curiosity; she wondered with silence on her lips, and tears in her eyes!

One day, when she had been ruminating these sweet and bitter fancies, Barnsley suddenly made his appearance. His last guinea was surrendered; his certificate signed; the estate of Closeman and Co. having paid twenty shillings in the pound. His looks were so haggard and wild, that in spite of their pre-determination, the good Heaphys could not help extending their hospitality to their uncle; and Barnsley readily agreed to dine with them. He had much to say to Margaret, and much to say to her trustee. Of the former, a great deal was unfolded in a *tête-à-tête* which occurred before dinner, when the host and hostess quitted them on hospitable thoughts intent; and the result of his communications was apparent in the agitation with which Miss Barnsley entered the dining-room, where cousin John was decanting a bottle of port wine with due regard to its bees'-wings.

'I want to ask you an awkward question,' said she, 'and you are so great a lover of truth, that I venture to ask it in a straightforward manner. Have you and Mrs. Heaphy any thoughts of inviting me to live with you?'

John Heaphy set down the decanter with surprise. 'None in the world!' said he, 'for I know you stand in no need of a home. My establishment is not worthy of a young lady of your fortune. But were it in the possibility of events, Margaret, for you to wish such a thing, my good woman and I would be as glad to have you as if you were born one of our own.'

'Thank you—thank you, you are too good to me!' cried

Margaret. 'My motive for making this abrupt inquiry is that my father is bent upon going abroad—that I see plainly he does not wish me to bear him company—that I am sure he would snatch at any offer of protection for me during his absence; and that I heartily desire no such offer may be made. I am anxious to be with my father, I *ought* to be with my father. None can feel that interest in his happiness which his daughter feels. I shall be patient with his infirmities, I shall rejoice in his pleasures, I shall study his comforts. Whether he admit it or not, I know I shall increase his happiness. Let me beg you, therefore, cousin, to warn Mrs. Heaphy against extending any mistaken kindness to me in presence of my father.'

'And you are quite sure, Margaret,' said John Heaphy, taking her two hands and looking her steadily in the face, '(for I have a right to ask it of my ward,) you are quite sure this resolution springs from no hankering after the pleasures of foreign parts?'

'Quite sure.'

'All young folks are fond of travel, why should you be different from the rest? Come, own it like a honest girl.—You want to see the world?'

'No! on my honour. Were all well with me and mine, I might indulge a wish to visit foreign countries; but as I speak in the presence of heaven, cousin, my *only* desire is to soften the trials of my father.'

'You are a good girl!' cried John Heaphy, relinquishing her hands to dash away a tear. 'A noble girl! God will be with you, Margaret, whatever difficulties you may have to combat. Go in peace! You shall have every aid to forward your projects that John Heaphy can afford you.'

And so it proved. When in the course of the evening Barnsley threw out a thousand baits for an invitation to Margaret to pass the winter at Clapton, the Heaphys were silent; till at length, his hints became so evident, that his nephew suddenly broke out with—'Ay—ay! As you say, 'tis a hard thing for young folks to go tramping about the world without knowing whom they may have to put up with. But to my thinking, a roaming life's none the more creditable for their parents. And since 'tis a settled thing that you and my cousin Margery are only to be parted by

death or matrimony, (for unless you share in the income the trustees are to pay to her separate hand, what are you to live on, I should like to know?)—take my word for it, uncle, the best thing were to let me look out for a nice snug place for you, hereabouts, where you might eat your mutton in quiet for the remainder of your days.'

The threat was enough!—Barnsley saw that both Margaret and her trustee were determined to hamper him with her company; and he had the solace of feeling that while under his own eye, he should have better means of securing her from matrimonial speculators. He was startled, indeed, when Mrs. Heaphy, bantering her cousin, contrived to inform him that Margaret had lately refused a man with ten thousand a year and an impending title; but to the great amazement of his daughter, instead of advocating the cause of Edward Sullivan as she expected, he answered carelessly, 'Margaret decided wisely. A man who has been once refused, never forgives the woman whose weakness relents in his favour. Margaret would have been an unhappy woman.'

It surprised his daughter still more to observe how little he was affected by having seen Stokeshill in the enjoyment of the object of his former antipathy. Sir Henry Woodgate, it appeared, had deported himself so kindly and judiciously towards him, as almost to have pacified his resentments. Of all the people connected with Westerton, *he* was the one who offered least offence to the mind of Barnsley. The election was at hand, and the mortified man had made up his mind to proceed at once to Belgium in order to escape from the scene; and Margaret had the mortification to find that within three days, before it was possible for her to receive on English ground a reply from Miss Winston to the announcement of her departure, they were to embark for Ostend. Her father seemed to appease the restlessness of his irritated spirit by this sudden movement. He evidently wanted to quit England and be gone.

Before the day of departure arrived, Margaret had a striking proof of the kindly feeling entertained towards her by her cousin. A comfortable travelling carriage was purchased for her use by John Heaphy.

'I am a plain man myself, and bring up my family plainly,' said he, in tendering his gift, 'and were I to start for York to-morrow with one of the girls, it would be by

the mail. But you, Margaret, have been reared with different notions; and I see no cause why my ward (for so I choose to think you) with eighteen hundred per annum or thereabouts, is to be thrown pell-mell into the company of foreign papists and adventurers. You have a right to be comfortably and respectably looked to, and so I have informed your father.'

'But, my dear cousin, before I offer you my thanks for your kindness, let me once more entreat you to regard that money as absolutely my father's.'

'Once and for all, Margaret, understand that I shall pay into your father's hands till you attain your majority, the interest—so long as he gives me a half-yearly receipt, specifying that it is for your use. After you are of age, or when you marry, you must receive it paid to your separate hand. The deed prolongs the trust for the interest of your children, and should you die childless, the whole reverts to your father; for old Winchmore took care to tie up the property, so that you could never lay a finger on it.'

'I understand very little of it all!' sighed Margaret, 'though necessity has compelled me to turn my thoughts to such subjects.'

'Fagg has been suggesting,' resumed Heaphy, 'that we have done very wrong not to make you a creditor upon your father's estate for the proceeds of Stokeshill, from the moment of your mother's death, when he ceased to have an interest in the property.'

'But I resided with him at Stokeshill.'

'A father is bound by law to maintain his child. However, no need to trouble *you* on that point, unless I establish my claim. You shall hear from me at Brussels.'

The day of departure arrived; and Margaret, though grieved to part from such kind and genuine friends, was delighted to find herself reunited to her father. She felt some portion of their respectability in life returning, from the moment she found herself again under his protection. Barnsley's eagerness to be off was most remarkable. He seemed to have taken an aversion to the very soil of England; and never in the most palmy days of his many-sided fussiness at Stokeshill, was he more fidgetty, more eager, more busy, than when hastening their embarkation at Ramsgate.

No sooner was the steam-boat in motion, than drawing a long breath, he threw himself on one of its wooden benches, as if relieved from a heavy load of care and responsibility.

Even his daughter, thus encouraged, gave way to feelings of delight at the prospect of losing sight and sound of so much that was calculated to perpetuate painful recollections. There was no drawback to her joy at quitting England, saving the lonely situation of poor Miss Winston: and the good woman had expressed herself in her recent letters so reconciled to her lot, so gratified by the respect with which she had been welcomed into the little society of Westerton, that Miss Barnsley was forced to admit she was more appropriately settled, than if about to commence anew the pilgrimage of life.

To Brussels, meanwhile, the travellers took their way, with the intention of passing there the remainder of the winter. It was fine, sparkling, January weather. The novelty and cheeriness of the scene afforded a gladdening contrast to the sad monotony of their recent existence. As they passed the night at Ghent, Margaret could scarcely repress a momentary desire to view the mansion once inhabited by the exiled Woodgates. Agnes, she knew, had already quitted it for England; and the house was probably on view. But what right had she to cherish an interest concerning the Woodgates? With a deep sigh, she upbraided herself with indulging such more than frivolous curiosity. But as they travelled on towards Brussels the following day, a slight remark upon the quaint antiquity of the streets of Ghent, drew forth from Barnsley an avowal that he had risen betimes for the purpose of visiting the place alone.

'As we seem destined to succeed each other,' said he, with a grim smile, 'I chose to acquaint myself with their abode. A gloomy dignified den,—just such as one can fancy to have been selected by old Sir Richard!'

'It would not suit you then?' said Margaret, not daring to express all the interest she felt in the subject.

'No matter whether it would or not. Miss Woodgate intends to keep it. Her servants are still there. She is only gone to visit her nephew. The people of Ghent spoke of her as an angel.—I suppose they could not spare her to Sir Henry and his bride.'

'Perhaps Miss Woodgate wished to retain a home of her own. There is nothing like independence!'

The word appeared to jar against the very soul of Barnsley. As it escaped his daughter's lips, he turned towards her with an expression that chilled her blood. Involuntarily she breathed a prayer to heaven that she might never again behold such a look in the countenance of her father.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

'Time rolls his ceaseless course,' sang poor Sir Walter—(and would that for him it could have remained stationary!) Years shake their dusty feet over our heads, whether the particles dispensed be of gold or arid sand. At the close of five winters from the time of their quitting England, Barnsley and his daughter were resident in Brussels; as a scattered seed, wafted by some chance breeze, takes root lightly in a soil from which it is never more to be rooted up.

Their position in the world was now definite and stable. The antecedents of their life, if even known in the society of Brussels, had made no impression—they were in the enjoyment of a fortune, considerable in the country they inhabited;—they possessed a handsome residence in the park, an agreeable chateau in the environs; a good establishment of servants, carriages, horses;—but, above all, they commanded that respect and deference, which, if rarely conceded to merit in adversity, is just as seldom vouchsafed to splendid vice. To the triumphs of the vile, however brilliant, the homage of the public is invariably qualified; but there was no drawback upon the regard bestowed upon the Barnsleys.

Margaret had now attained her four and twentieth year, the crowning epoch perhaps of English beauty; and if lovely at eighteen, was now a thousand times more attractive. Hers was that high intellectual order of beauty which leaves a vague, but indelible impression;—and 'the mind—the music breathing from the face' might have conveyed the idea of a too lofty mental superiority, but for the exquisite sweetness, the serene repose, breathed by her expressive

countenance.—There was grace in every movement of Margaret Barnsley,—melancholy in all her smiles. Her mind was far more cultivated—her manners more polished than of old. The noble and discriminating in Brussels were accustomed to cite her as the most distinguished of her countrywomen whose presence had ever graced their city.

In Barnsley, the lapse of years had effected changes still more remarkable. The habitual society and filial devotedness of his daughter, seemed to have exercised on his character the influence of a beneficent planet. He had grown mild, sedate, studious. His mind, relieved from the wear and tear of incessant business, had submitted to a more legitimate domination; and Margaret was at length rewarded by finding a friend, a companion, nay a counsellor in her father.

Miracles of this description are not, however, accomplished by the stroke of a wand. It had needed time—it had needed patience—it had needed the interposing influence of Heaven —to soften that rugged heart into its present mood. The first year of their residence in Belgium had been to Margaret a year of probation. Jealous, susceptible, starting at straws, her father seemed to misinterpret every word that fell from her lips. His moroseness and gloominess of spirit sometimes induced her to fear for his very reason. He could not *forget*, he *would* not forgive; care like a gnawing worm seemed to have fixed its tooth into his heart!—There was a constant restlessness, a perpetual anxiety about him. He did not sleep—he did not eat;—and the physicians whom in secret his daughter consulted, assured her that change of air and scene was indispensable. Margaret made it her personal entreaty, therefore, that they should travel. She affected a wish to see the world; and they proceeded into Germany, residing successively in all the cities of the empire. Every day brought its advantage. That which tended to cultivate the mind of the daughter, served to subdue the heart of the father.

Out of reach of English associations, he seemed to gather strength and courage. The suit prosecuted by Heaphy and Fagg in behalf of Margaret's claims, instead of affording satisfaction, had irritated him to frenzy; and when this was not only decided, but decided in her favour so as to redeem

upwards of thirty thousand pounds out of the hands of the Philistines, he had no further excuse for the accusations of officious zeal he had been bringing against his nephew. From that period, his irritation began to subside.

The Barnsleys were passing the summer in Saxony, at the epoch of the Belgian revolution. During the first winter of their residence at Brussels, Margaret had received overtures of patronage from the Countess van Pierrsen, who would have delighted in the opportunity of parading in her own high circles, a beautiful and wealthy English girl, the daughter of a member of parliament, who had occupied, during Sir Henry's minority, the ancient family mansion of her son. But Margaret was too high-minded to place herself under the protection of the mother of Woodgate. She knew her own station, and determined to adhere to it. The object of her future life was not to gild over her mediocrity of birth, for the purpose of dazzling the eyes of the vulgar; but to restore peace of mind to her father.

On their return, two years afterwards, to the spot from whence they started, the whole system of things was changed. The Countess van Pierssen and her royal patrons were gone to mope at the Hague; and in the new court of Leopold and his bride, these discrepancies and untowardnesses were visible, the immediate consequences of a revolution; but the salient angles of which are worn down by the friction of a few years 'working of the system,' like a macadamised road, ground into a smooth and consistent surface. So many of the equals, nay the inferiors of the Barnsleys, were warmly welcomed into the court of the citizen kingdom, that there was every plea for a change of resolution. But Margaret was firm.

'We have no pretensions to courtiership,' she would reply, in answer to the persuasions of the Vilains XIV, Merodes, and d'Arlembergs, who wished her to share with them the royal galas of the carnival. 'It is a sad argument in favour of my presentation, that others are received at court wholly unqualified for such a distinction.'

Some blamed her humility—some her pride; but those who condemned her were delighted to form part of the brilliant circle collected round her by the charm of her beauty, and the fame of her fortune. All that was most

eminent in Brussels gloried in an intimacy with *la belle Anglaise*.

A peculiar character had been impressed upon Margaret Barnsley by her disappointment in life. Gentler than ever in her deportment towards others, she was rigidly stern towards herself. Every part of their establishment which tended to the comfort or credit of her father, was studiedly handsome; but for herself, she indulged in not one idle luxury. She wore no ornaments; her dress, though composed of rich materials, was invariably plain. She devoted to Miss Winston that portion of her fortune which she would have otherwise apportioned to superfluities; and it might have been inferred, from all this self-denial, that Margaret felt the necessity of some peculiar act of atonement. But it was not so. They had been on the verge of actual beggary; and her sacrifice was the sacrifice of gratitude to Providence, for having preserved her father from that sorest of straits.

Bright and prosperous, too, as was the land of promise she had achieved, one gloomy monumental cypress was springing in the choicest of its groves. Though to all the world her father appeared sedate, sensible, and cheerful,—though announced by the gossips of Brussels to every new-comer as 'a most agreeable, well-informed, gentlemanly Englishman, formerly in parliament, and now devoted to studious pursuits,'—Margaret beheld in the grey-headed, lank-visaged, thin-voiced man who formed the object of her prayers to Heaven, a far different object from that apparent to the world. *She* saw a human being into whose soul the iron had entered, and was still rankling. She had not watched him, sleeping and waking with sensitive tenderness throughout their wanderings, without discovering that an interposing cloud subsisted between himself and Heaven. She dared not indeed attempt to lay her finger on the wound which thrilled him with such frequent anguish, though confident of its existence as if the ghastly orifice lay festering before her eyes. In moments of his utmost parental tenderness,—of those softened moods of mind when some congenial aspect of nature seems to bring the Almighty into contact with his creatures—such as the hush of evening with its solitary star—the dim moonlight,—the breezy sweetness succeeding

to a summer storm,—the majestic progress of an abounding river through plains devoted to the benefit of mankind,—she had seen him convulsed by sudden torture.—She had seen her father gather himself up, corrected, from some expansion of happy feeling, as if he had no right to be glad,—as if he had *scarcely* a right to be good.

Margaret had not courage to ask herself what this might mean. Wounded tenderness or wounded conscience, alone impresses such permanent depression. Her father was not a man of much depth of feeling:—she dared not pursue the inquiry!—She must not even hazard a conjecture. But the result was not the less clear to her intelligent and upright mind. Her father cherished a secret sorrow in which he did not choose to claim her participation; and she felt that it became her to rejoice soberly in her mirth;—to bear her faculties meekly;—nor for a moment suffer herself to be unduly exalted by the flatteries of society.

For during their residence on the continent, the English heiress had found suitors innumerable. Not a city or bathing-place they visited, but brought its Count or Baron to her feet; and at Brussels, when her excellences were appreciated, she might have connected herself with more than one of her countrymen likely to satisfy even the exclusivism of a Lady Walmer.

But, 'from Love's weak childish bow she lived unharmed;' and neither persuasion nor argument could shake her resolution to devote her future days to her father. If such a sacrifice had been voluntarily conceded while Barnsley was disregardful of her affection, how much more was it sanctified *now* when he seemed to live but in her presence?

The English newspapers had long announced the marriage of Lord Chilton of Brereton Castle with the Hon. Mary Drewe, youngest daughter of the late Viscount Shoreham; and though for Edward Sullivan she had never cherished a particle of what is called love, yet having sometimes feared that his perseverance and the force of early association might prove too much for her resolution, she rejoiced in the event. She felt assured that no other human being would obtain sufficient influence over her heart to obliterate the impression, real or imaginary, created by the noble qualities of Sir Henry Woodgate.

Her self-gratulations were not diminished when the Chiltons passed through Brussels on their way to Spa, accompanied by Lady Shoreham and Lucilla Drewe. Edward was not improved by time and matrimony. Having little sympathy with his wife, he had fallen in love with himself for want of some other attachment; and was grown an egotist and an epicure. Lord Chilton passed his life in complaining of the rumpling of the rose leaf. He had always a d——d bad cook,—or d——d bad coachman,—or d——d uneasy carriage,—or tight boots, or even an East wind, or November fog, to swear at!—He wanted to find something wrong because things were going too right with him. He was angry at having boys instead of girls. He was growing fat and Lady Chilton thin. He hated fat men and thin women. —Nothing so d——d unnatural as a woman shaped like a fish-slice; and after meeting at Brussels the idol of his boyhood, more beautiful and more admired than ever, he passed so fretful a fortnight, that poor Mary's attractions were diminished by another stone. Margaret smilingly congratulated herself, when Lady Chilton's diamonds, and Lady Chilton's distinction at court, excited the spleen of her father, that she had escaped being the *souffre douleur* of an idle, useless, Sybarite.

But the results of this renewal of acquaintance were not altogether satisfactory. Lady Shoreham, worn out by the bickerings of her daughter and son-in-law, having escaped early in the season from Spa, established herself at Brussels for the winter. She was now a declining dowager of moderate income; and Lucilla Drewe inclining towards thirty, sickly and fanciful. The hollow education she had received afforded her no consolation for the loss of youth and beauty. Ten years' incessant practice of sonatas on the harp, and crow-quill copyings of *vers de société* into morocco albums, will weary even the flimsiest mind of such pursuits; and poor Lucilla could take refuge from her *ennui* only in some new vagary. Sometimes she turned evangelical,—sometimes an invalid. Sometimes the vacuity created by want of that legitimate object of interest—a happy home and family,—took refuge in the infinitesimal quackeries of homœopathy; sometimes in the polemics of some visionary, raving himself into profitable notoriety. But whether saint or sinner,

sick or sorry,—she was consistent in rendering her mother the victim of her whims.

'I am sure, my dear, I cannot guess what you do to preserve your sweet complexion!' said Lady Shoreham to Margaret, at their first private interview. 'I declare you are looking younger and prettier than ever.'

'I have so many occupations,' replied Margaret, 'that I have no leisure to be ill.'

'I wish I could extend the compliment to your poor father,' whispered the dowager, drawing forward the blonde cap over her rouged cheeks, arranging the false curls on her temples, and contracting her lips to conceal a splendid 'set,' by Desirabode. 'Your father is shockingly broken!—Mr. Barnsley is not fifty-five, not more than fifty-three, for he was two years younger than poor dear Lord Shoreham, and I protest he is quite an old man! His hair is as white as snow.'

'My father enjoys excellent health,' observed Margaret, with a sigh.

'Which makes the change in his appearance only more extraordinary. For I, who may certainly compliment myself on looking fifteen years younger (I *am* five), have the most wretched constitution! It is amazing what I go through! coughs that would wear down a giant; and fevers that scorch me to a cinder. Yet, as my maid often assures me, there has not been the slightest variation in my looks for the last ten years. I fancy that at a certain time of life one comes to a standstill.'

'So long as we feel——'

'And Lucilla!' civilly interrupted Lady Shoreham, 'did you ever see such a wreck? By daylight, poor dear Lucilla is as yellow as a quince! and so drawn about the mouth, with those two wretched lines which Shoreham calls her parentheses. So lovely as she was! There is not a vestige of youth in Lucilla! Hot rooms and ether! The young women of the present day enervate themselves into premature old age.'

'Surely we ride and walk more than in the days of hoops, hair-powder, and high-heeled shoes?'

'Ride and walk! My dear child, poor dear Lucilla never leaves her room till two o'clock.'

'But surely other women—'

'Certainly not, my dear!' interrupted Lady Shoreham, anticipating all to which she did not choose to listen. 'Look for instance at Lady Woodgate—Helen Sullivan that was,—Mary's sister-in-law. As poor dear Mary often says, (when Chilton finds fault with her for being delicate,) Lady Woodgate's robustness will be the death of hundreds of her sex. Lady Woodgate is a pattern woman, and lives by rule; rises at seven—breakfasts at eight—scolds the maids, and teaches the boys at nine—walks at ten, looks after her schools at eleven—walks again at twelve—sees the children at dinner at one—lunches at two—rides from three to five—dines at six—teas at eight, and passes the rest of the evening in rational conversation; to bed at eleven—and so forth, from year's end to year's end.'

'A very reasonable routine of life,' observed Margaret, trusting that the blushes into which she had been startled by this allusion to the name of Woodgate were subsiding.

'Reasonable! As poor dear Lu and Mary often say, they would as soon be an eight-day clock!'

'Lady Woodgate is probably very happy.'

'More than one can assert of Sir Henry, I suspect.'

'Are they not supposed then to agree?'

'Lady Woodgate is too stately to quarrel; but there is little accordance of feeling between them! All the Sullivans are so proud!'

'Not more so, surely, than the Woodgates?'

'But unluckily, the Sullivans are proud and rich,—the Woodgates proud and poor; so that Helen's pride is constantly fretting against her husband's. She was always opinionated; and now she is so dictatorial there is no bearing her.'

'Is Helen as handsome as ever?'

'Scarcely a vestige of good looks! Women on her large scale grow bony when they lose the plumpness of youth. Her countenance is harsh, and her complexion coarse. There is a decidedness about her that is really *too* pronounced. She wants to give the law in our part of the country, as Lady Walmer does in hers. She can't bear people to be visited whom she does not think right and proper. It was entirely her insolence to that horrid Lady

Catalpa, by the way, that roused poor dear Shoreham's mettle into marrying the woman; and between politics, and controversy, and one nonsense or other, Lady Woodgate has divided the neighbourhood against itself.'

'With so happy a home, I suppose she feels independent of the opinion of the world.'

'Happy! In my opinion it is anything but happy. I shall be very much surprised if it do not turn out that she has led Sir Henry into expenses much beyond his means; as Lady Margaret observes, she is always for doing things as they are done at Hawkhurst with a fortune five times as large as that of the Woodgates. Because her extravagance is methodical, she fancies it is not extravagant.'

'Are their circumstances then involved?' inquired Margaret.

'What else can be the cause of Sir Henry's melancholy? You never saw a man more systematically out of spirits! If it were not for that excellent creature Agnes, who is there like a halcyon on the troubled waters, he would lead a miserable life.'

'Miss Woodgate resides with them, then? That is some sort of concession on the part of Helen.'

'Of concession! My dear child, it is one of the worst features in the case! If you could but see the studied civility of Lady Woodgate towards that poor woman, the laborious effort with which the children are brought up to recollect not to forget to be properly attentive to their papa's relation! Never was duty more ostentatiously performed!'

'Poor Agnes!'

'Ay, poor Agnes! Well may you say poor Agnes! Her youth blighted by the severity, and her age chilled by the coldness of her relations.'

'Not of Sir Henry, I trust?' demanded Margaret, with more energy.

'Oh, no. Sir Henry really loves her, or she would not remain at Stokeshill.'

'She is probably attached to the spot by early reminiscences,' added Margaret with a heavy sigh.

'Ah! poor thing! I could not help thinking, when she returned there, what a strange feeling she must have experienced in visiting the grave of that young man; *she* a

middle-aged woman, yet retaining the freshness of feeling of that first attachment!'

Margaret Barnsley involuntarily recalled to mind the pathetic incident of the disinterment of the young Swedish miner, after an inhumation of sixty years, which had converted his still surviving mistress into a decrepit old woman.

But it was not to Lady Shoreham she chose to indulge in the expression of sentiment.

It was in her heart she pondered over these things, and grieved in silence over the still overclouded destinies of Woodgate.

CHAPTER XL.

The society of Lady Shoreham and her daughter, if it did not increase the brilliancy of the circle of which the Barnsleys formed a part, served to revive a thousand associations at once painful and pleasurable to both father and daughter. For years the high-toned mind of Margaret had existed in a world of its own. But the spell seemed broken by the arrival of Lucilla Drewe. That mysterious laceration of spirit on the part of Barnsley which had so powerfully influenced the character of his daughter, gave way for a time on the renewal of his intimacy with his former friends. He seemed to recollect himself, to draw himself up, to assume the attitude he had formerly held, and had still in some degree a right to hold. He threw aside his cares, *threw* rather than *laid;* for the effort with which so desirable a change was accomplished, served to damp the satisfaction of his daughter.

To the appeals made by Lucilla Drewe to her compassion, it was indispensable to lend a pitying ear. Lucilla, having no longer beauty or fashion to increase her importance, had been fain to take up with affectation!

'Do, my dear soul, have mercy on us,' said she, the first time she could gain the ear of Margaret unobserved, 'and assist our *reconnaissances* of the *terra incognita* in which we are to pass the winter. You know all these horrid Brussels people by reputation, or want of reputation; pray take care that we do not admit anything *too* dreadful into our society!'

'I see no reason why you should not command the best society.'

'Of course, nothing can be easier! I find from Sir William Walsh, the *attaché*, that *your* circle is one of the best.'

Margaret smiled at the inference.

'No particular care has been taken to render it so. I flatter myself we have little attraction for those whom you term horrid people, or they for us.'

'If I could but say the same of mamma! *Our* house, my dear Margaret, wherever we go, seems to gather together insects and reptiles like the wicker-traps of tropical countries. An English ladyship tells for something, you know, with the fifth-rate order of English people one meets economising in such places as Brussels, Florence, Tours; and unluckily poor dear mamma has all a dowager's *penchant* for being toadied. The wretches have only to make up to her, and she is ready to dine with them, tea with them, écarter with them; without considering how far her daughter may be compromised by being seen in such company.'

'I am not aware of any disgraceful company into which Lady Shoreham is likely to fall,' said Margaret, scarcely able to repress a smile, so long was it since she had witnessed the grimaces of English finery.

'Oh! as to *you*, I am afraid you are as bad as mamma. I recollect you used to visit those abominable people at Westerton.'

'I have no pretensions to exclusiveness.'

'Why the embassy people assure me you have refused the Prince of Greitz and one of the d'Oultremonts, and might command any society here you thought proper!'

'I enjoy the society of those I find agreeable. Whether they belong to what you call the fifth-rate order or the first, I never pause to inquire.'

'My dear Margaret, that might do in London or Paris, where caste is so distinctly established. But in places where (as in the times of those awful country dances in England, when the ladies'-maids were called in to make up the couples) society is not extensive enough to admit of selection—'

'Not of *fastidious* selection—'

'Margaret, Margaret! I know something of the world. Brussels is the "lady's last stake,"—the paradise of decayed beauties and pinchbeck men of fashion. People get on at Brussels who cannot get on elsewhere.'

'Then why attempt the risk of passing a winter here?' demanded Margaret, longing to add, 'we did extremely well without you.'

'Oh! don't fancy the whim was mine. I would as soon settle in Van Diemen's Land! I shall try to doze through our *séjour*, in the hope that mamma may economise *écus* enough during the winter to carry us through next season in town.'

But the dainty Lucilla soon found an occupation which rendered her blind to the flagrancies of the place. Prince D'Artenberg, one of the most distinguished courtiers of King Leopold, appeared to surrender himself a captive to her charms: and no one was at the pains to inform her that d'Artenberg, one of Margaret's unalienable adorers, had no other object in resorting to the mansion of Lady Shoreham, than that of seeking the society of the cruel idol of his affections.

Of the many who had honoured her with their homage, Margaret certainly preferred the Prince. He was a man past the enthusiasm of youth; in whom it would have delighted her to confide as a friend, could she have induced him to renounce his pretensions as a lover. She had advised him to marry, in the hope of obtaining a valuable accession to the limited circle of her friends; and on first noticing his advances to Lucilla, started at the idea that he was about to profit by her counsels. For it was not *such* a wife she had intended should fill up the measure of his happiness and her own!—Her confidence was great in the strength of mind and delicacy of sensibility of the Prince. But she recollected how often wisdom itself is over-mastered by the infatuation which the weakest woman has power to inspire; and doubtful whether his better judgment would secure her sober friend from an indiscreet alliance, felt certain, that it must insure his bitter repentance. A word of warning, however, would be ungenerous towards her countrywoman; nor had she a right to dictate to d'Artenberg upon such a point.

'I shall lose my friend,—I must be content to lose my

friend!' exclaimed Margaret, reverting with regret to the pleasant hours of converse they had been wont to pass together at the little château of Groenenwald occupied by herself and her father during the summer months, where she had first become acquainted with the Prince, to whose magnificent domains it adjoined. 'The companionship of a man of elegant mind and rational pursuits promised to brighten the evening of my days, and render Groenenwald agreeable to my father. But no matter!—I must reconcile myself to the loss, as I have to others more important. My life has been a life of resignations.'

But poor Margaret's security of soul was exposed to sad assaults by the pretty, fanciful Lucilla. She was more jealous of Margaret *now*, than when Wynnex Abbey looked down upon Stokeshill Place; for Lady Shoreham, addicted like most frivolous old women to murmurs and complaints, was constantly pointing out to her daughter for emulation, the devotion of Margaret to her father, and for envy, her triumphs in society;—and Lucilla must have been something better than a vain, superficial, disappointed girl of fashion, to resist the opportunity of parading an important conquest before the eyes of her rival.

Even Barnsley was mortified to perceive the attentions of so distinguished a suitor transferred to any thing of the name of Drewe. He had often exhorted Margaret to accept the hand of her noble suitor. His own health was breaking. He felt that she might soon want a protector; and the mild, contemplative character of d'Artenberg seemed to mark them for each other. It was not now with John Barnsley as in the days when he had thrown the proposals of Edward Sullivan at the head of a daughter whom he regarded as a portion of his domestic goods and chattels. He knew her value now;—he knew her superiority over himself. He venerated her high principles,—he loved her gentle practices; and felt that it would be a comfort to him, in laying his dishonoured head in the grave, to bequeath her to the guardianship of one who held so high a place in the aristocracy of a country where he had affixed no stigma upon his child. Barnsley had long ceased to desire that Margaret should become the wife of an Englishman; and, when the letters of Heaphy reproached him with the protraction of his residence abroad, and the

probability that it would consign his girl to the arms of a papist husband, he smiled contemptuously at the yearly increasing prejudices of his narrow-minded nephew.

When, therefore, in the course of the carnival, a splendid ball was given at the Hôtel d'Artenberg of which the fair Lucilla was reported to be the object, Barnsley experienced a degree of vexation which he could not disguise from his daughter.

'You well know,' said he, in a tone of despondency, 'how little I have attempted to bias your judgment in such matters. I tried to persuade you to become Duchess of Grantville; and experience soon proved the madness of having rejected such a settlement in life. From that period till now, I have refrained from influencing your choice; but I own it was my hope to see you eventually subdued by the deep devotion of Prince d'Artenberg.'

'Deep indeed,' retorted Margaret with a smile,—'since a few advances on the part of Lady Shoreham and her daughter have made him their own. What have I to regret in so versatile an admirer?'

'It is your own doing,—it is all your own doing!—Your coldness, your hauteur threw him into their hands.—Ah! Margaret,—I knew the arrival of those women at Brussels boded us no good. The name of Drewe seems to exercise an evil influence over my destinies. There is a fatal spell for *me* in every thing connected with Kent.'

'Rather say, a fatal spell for our friend the Prince!' said Margaret, cheerfully. 'For *me*, dearest father, I am too happy and too independent to have a thought for such grievances.'

'Say not too independent, Margaret,—it is tempting Providence!—I thought myself independent at Stokeshill;—and behold how it ended!—It *may* end so again!'

'Unless a national bankruptcy should take place, our property is now secure.'

'Nothing is secure in this world,' said her father;—'nothing permanent! It will embitter my last moments, Margaret, if I do not leave you to the protection of some honourable man, whose arm will uphold you, and whose opulence surround you with comfort.'

'I *am* surrounded with comfort!' cried Margaret. 'What

can a reasonable being desire beyond what we are now enjoying?'

'No matter!' exclaimed her father, with one of his gloomy expressions of countenance. 'If you would have me die happy, you must marry!'

Margaret listened without much alarm to this denunciation. Her father was scarcely past the prime of life. She still trusted to enjoy with him years and years of happiness. Her anxiety regarded rather the perils environing their friend, and the future comfort of their neighbourship at Groenenwald. For Lucilla Drewe no longer alluded to a season in London, but shone as one of the finest of fine ladies at the court balls; while her dresses at the *bals costumés* so much in vogue at Brussels, were chosen from the pictures of Vandyke and Rubens gracing the splendid gallery of the Hôtel d'Artenberg.

The season of satins and brocades at length fretted itself to a close; and Margaret, when she saw her little coterie gradually thinned by the dispersion of its foreign members to the bathing-places of France and Germany, began to hope that Lady Shoreham's economies had been successful; and took care to notice to Lucilla that the first drawing-room had put forth its plumage at St. James's, that the opera was in high force, and Almack's in full *éclat;* that Lady Walmer, who was now exercising for her lovely daughter, Lady Eva, the chaperonial care she had formerly bestowed on Miss Barnsley, already announced a ball; and that Lady Henry Marston, who had turned saint, was beginning her weekly expounding parties.—In short, it was time for those who were Londonly intent to be moving.

But to these announcements, Lucilla listened unmoved. She cared no more for London than for the Sandwich Islands; and was waiting only to ascertain whether d'Artenberg's inclinations pointed towards Spa, Carlsbad, Baden, Wiesbaden, Barèges, or Lucca, in order to determine to which of the mineral springs of Europe she was to be indebted for her annual cure. And when it appeared that, instead of hastening to either of these gaseous regions, the Prince was intent upon filling the Château d'Artenberg with guests, to renew upon the greensward the pleasures which had grown insipid on glossy parquets, uniting under his splendid roof all that

was distinguished in the circles of literature and the arts with all that was attractive of the diplomatic coteries, Lady Shoreham avowed her intention of passing the spring at Brussels. 'It was too early for Spa. They must wait the arrival of their English friends.'

Of course it was more agreeable to await them in the beautiful groves of d'Artenberg, than in the now deserted Hôtel de Flandres. The Barnsleys were already settled at Groenenwald; and the first promenade suggested by Lucilla to the gay cavalcade which daily set forth from the portico of the château, was to the little farm which Margaret's taste had embellished.

Even in that land of floriculture, Groenenwald stood renowned; and the little domain, consisting in a beautiful flower-garden skirted by a wilderness and copse, was too limited for ambition to find a vacant spot to stock with cares.

Restored to her usual happy peace of mind by the renewal of her simple avocations, Margaret received the gay assemblage with graceful self-possession; and if for a moment she regretted that d'Artenberg had broken in upon their calm neighbourly intercourse of former summers by this brilliancy of hospitality, it was but justice to him to remember that it was her own interdiction which had put an end to his wanderings by her side under the lime-groves, and the protestations of attachment with which he had so often interrupted her labours among her rose-trees. Since she had all but exiled him from Groenenwald, it was but natural he should strive to embellish his splendid solitude at Artenberg.

Still, it required patience to bear with the conceit of Lucilla in appropriating him to herself; and with the absurdity of the idlers of the party who, persuaded that they beheld an impending Princesse d'Artenberg, could not sufficiently applaud the good taste of their host by their homage to the merits of his new dulcinea.

It was impossible, however, for d'Artenberg's unconcealable admiration for the Corinne of Groenenwald, not to excite uneasiness in her rival. Lucilla, not wholly at her ease, exhibited more than her usual share of affectation in the affability with which she condescended to admire the sweet little spot and patronise its Hamadryad. She had already striven to excite a disparaging spirit against Barnsley by whispering

to the echoes of the Allée Verte, the secret of his origin and bankruptcy. But d'Artenberg listened unmoved. He knew from Margaret's lips that she was of obscure degree. But her high-minded humility created for her a station of her own; and in spite of his august pedigree and kinsmanship with kings, he felt her to be as much *his* superior, as that of all the honourable misses of Great Britain!

Never, indeed, had he felt more conscious of her perfections than when, after some days' endurance of the empty finicalities of Lucilla Drewe and Lady Shoreham, he caught sight of Margaret in her dress of simple white, between the mossy trunks of her favourite beech trees,—a book in her hand and a smile upon her lips,—happy and happy making at Groenenwald! He could not accost her without emotion. He longed to make a boast of his forbearance with the heartless and frivolous tribe to which he was doing the honours of Artenberg for her sake. He longed to say, 'You forbad me to make your house my daily haunt:—you refused to honour me with yours and your father's presence when alone at the château;—admire with what a host of plagues I have surrounded myself in hopes to silence your scruples!'

Little, however, as the Barnsleys gave him credit for such motives, Margaret feared it might bear the interpretation of a paltry envy if she declined to take part in a brilliant entertainment which the Prince had projected to do honour to his English guests. There was to be a regatta on the lake fronting the château; and at night, *feux d'artifices* to illuminate the beautiful fountains and *châteaux-d'eau* for which the park of Artenberg is celebrated.—There was to be dancing, music, everything which the gallantry of a *grand seigneur* could dedicate to the delight of his guests; and Lucilla and her mother, radiant with the consciousness of being queens of the *fête*, having seconded the Prince's invitation, compliance was inevitable.

Never had the fine avenues of Artenberg appeared so majestic in her eyes, as when, accompanied by her father, she drove under the tufted shades of the chestnut-trees on the appointed day!—May, with its opening roses and delicate verdure, was in its prime. The turf was enamelled with spring flowers. A pair of snowy swans were bridling on the lake, blue as the auspicious sky reflected in its waters. The

park, lordly as was its distribution, had all that *riant* aspect which the most cheerful of English landscapes seems to disdain; and there was a buoyancy in the atmosphere to which even the heart of Margaret's care-worn father appeared susceptible. As they drew near the palace, of which the fine architectural *façade* was well thrown out by the noble groves sheltering its northern frontage, and discerned the spreading terraces ornamented with statues, and the fountains throwing up their silvery threads into the sunshine, Margaret could not forbear a momentary pang of regret that all this nobleness would be thrown away upon the frippery fancy of a Lucilla Drewe!

'Lady Shoreham may find something here to console her for the mean contraction of the landscape at Wynnex!' observed Barnsley, with a bitter glance at the armorial bearings gracing the splendid seigneurial *grille*. 'And all this, Margaret, might have been yours—'

'Had I not been contented with Groenenwald and my father!'—interrupted his gentle companion, imprinting an affectionate kiss upon his hand. 'Do not reproach me for being contented with home; and least of all to-day, since we have come so far to smile and be merry.'

Barnsley replied by a deep sigh. In spite of himself and his child, there was heaviness in his heart.

CHAPTER XLI.

There are moments in every human existence when the heart becomes susceptible of profounder interests and the mind of higher inspirations, than in the common career of life. Often as Margaret Barnsley had been welcomed to that princely domain, never before had she contemplated its magnificence with reference to the importance it might confer on its possessor as an ornament to society, and a benefactor to mankind. In traversing the marble hall, whose Corinthian columns overlooked a hundred breathing statues of Parian marble, it occurred to her how much such opportunities would be thrown away on the frivolous fair one to whose rule the domains of Artenberg were about to be

submitted. She regretted it not for herself, but for the Prince and the country of which she was an adopted daughter.

Yet never had Artenberg welcomed her to his house with more devoted reverence. Appreciating too well the proud feelings of Margaret to render her an object of observation, he testified his regard by the respect and precedence accorded to her father. Arm in arm with his noble neighbour, Barnsley was warmly greeted into a group of the highest of the Belgian *noblesse*, among whom his English proficiency in rural economy was regarded as an invaluable acquisition. It was impossible for Margaret to forbear a glance of triumph towards Lady Shoreham, to ascertain whether *she* observed the consideration which, even in his decadence, waited upon her Kentish neighbour.

But Margaret was not allowed to remain a mere spectator. Simple and sensible, she was a universal favourite. The young respected,—the old loved her. From the twaddling dowager to the prattling girl of fifteen, all had their welcome for one from whose lips they were secure from flippancy,—from whose brow from sullenness. *La belle Anglaise* was so mild, so forbearing, that even that bigot race forgave her Protestantism; so bright, so distinguished, that even the highest and mightiest pardoned her ignoble birth.

As the pleasures of the day proceeded, Artenberg could not refuse himself the gratification, or her the justice, of leading her to the prow of honour in his gay flotilla, and selecting her to open the ball. '*Ma charmante voisine*' had, however, so often been honoured before with similar distinctions, that no surprise was excited among the Belgian beauties, and no indignation among the Belgian dignitaries. Aware of his preference, nothing appeared more natural than such a distinction offered to the lady of his thoughts; and they expected from Lady Shoreham and her daughter a similar approbation of the honours enjoyed by their lovely countrywoman. But Lady Shoreham was suffering from the *migraine* which poor dear Lucilla always took care to inflict upon her mother.

The evening was an evening of peculiar happiness to all but themselves. The *fête* proved highly successful; for the visitors, alive to the charm attendant on every entertainment

connected with the opening summer, were in the mood to be delighted. Barnsley was overjoyed by the homage rendered to the pride and solace of his days; and even Margaret was pleased at being convicted of injustice towards the good taste of a friend whom she esteemed. She gradually lost all fear of an unsatisfactory neighbour at Artenberg.

This discovery imparted, perhaps, unusual graciousness to her manner; for the Prince was evidently as much pleased with his guest as she with her host; and, as he led her to her carriage at midnight—the sober period of most continental festivities,—he could not refrain from whispering a request for permission to visit Groenenwald the following day. Margaret appeared to hesitate; and it was from her father's interference that he received a warm assent to his petition.

Nearly three miles of a road leading through the forest of Artenberg, intervened between the château and Groenenwald. Barnsley, on entering the carriage, had determined to devote that interval to the renewal of his exhortations to his daughter. But when he found himself seated by her side, with her hand pressed in his, and recollected that the counsels he was about to offer were to interpose a third person between them for evermore, his voice became inaudible; and the cold tears chased each other down his careworn face, as he mused in silence upon the past, the present, and the future. It was a relief to both when the delicate fragrance of the limegrove adjoining their home, diffused through the still night air, announced that they were close upon Groenenwald,—calm, quiet, sacred Groenenwald!

The gates flew open as the carriage approached; and, on entering the drawing-room, where lights were burning, though through its still open windows breathed the fresh fragrance of the flower-garden, they were agreeably surprised by the sight of letters from England lying on the table. Margaret was about to retire to her room, to give her whole attention to one of Miss Winston's valuable, friendly, motherly letters, when an ejaculation which burst from her father's lips arrested her departure.

'Good God! my brother arrived in England!—*ill*, too,—in a precarious state!' cried he; and Margaret, taking a seat

by her father's side, waited till he should have completed the perusal of this startling communication. But on coming to the close, Mr. Barnsley fell into a reverie little favourable to communication. He sighed deeply,—repeatedly; and, after a pause, slowly re-perused the letter in his hand.

'Yes, I fear I must go!' was his first comment on the intelligence so unexpectedly received.

'*Go!* To England?' inquired Margaret.

'To London! Your uncle Clement's confidential servant writes me, by his desire, that his master quitted India in February in a dying state, and, though improved by the voyage, has probably only a few weeks to live—perhaps only a few days. He wishes to see me, Margaret. We have not passed through life in brotherly affection, such as ought to bind together, even though parted by time and space, the sons of one father and one mother. I would gladly exchange words of kindness with him on this side the grave!'

'Is it not strange that the Heaphys have never written to apprise us of his arrival?'

'They ought to have done so. They perhaps studied their own interest by surrounding poor Clement at such a moment exclusively with their own family.'

'No!' replied Margaret firmly. 'My cousin John is the most upright of men. Believe me, he is altogether superior to so vile a motive.'

'It is but natural,—nay, it is but right that he should have considered in the first instance the interest of his own children.'

'Not in the *first* instance. His first duty, was to *himself*, —the duty of integrity!'

Barnsley rose abruptly from his seat. 'No matter what the motive of his silence. It is clear that poor Clement's servant has written by his master's orders. They are at an hotel in Albemarle Street. I have no time to lose.'

'When do we start, then?' inquired Margaret.

'I shall send for post horses that I may reach Brussels by daylight. I must have a passport—I must get money from the banker's.'

'We have enough, I fancy, in the house,' observed Margaret. 'I will have the chaise-seat carried to your room,—the imperial will be sufficient for myself.'

'You surely do not think of accompanying me?' inquired Barnsley, aghast.

'Not *accompany* you, my dear father?' inquired Margaret, with unfeigned surprise. 'And why not? you know how long I have been anxious to visit England, to take a last look at my dear infirm old friend,—to see the good Heaphys; —you know how reluctantly I have submitted to your aversion to the journey.'

'Yes! I own myself averse to such an expedition,' replied her father. 'But a dying brother has sacred claims upon me. I *must* go!'

'And *I*.—Indeed, dear father, I *must* bear you company. It is now six years since we lived a day apart. I could not bear the separation. You are not so young, not so strong, as you used to be. I should be in hourly uneasiness during your absence; and *you*, (yes! vain as it sounds, I am convinced of it) *you* would be in hourly want of your daughter!'

'I should, indeed, my dearest Margaret,' replied Barnsley, his voice tremulous with emotion. 'But we must not always indulge in selfish considerations. I cannot be blind to the state of affairs between yourself and the Prince; nor shall anything induce me to create an obstacle to the happy termination of a connexion which is the dearest object of my life. Were you to quit Belgium, it is impossible to guess what mischief might be conjured up against you by those two foolish Wynnex women.'

'What could Lady Shoreham or her daughter do or say to bias the opinions of the Prince, which they have not in all probability said or done already?'

'No matter. Everything is now in train for an immediate conclusion. Make me happy, Margaret. Remain quietly here; and let the first tidings that reach me in London be the news of your engagement to Prince d'Artenberg.'

'But surely, dear father, you must perceive,' answered Miss Barnsley, harassed and uneasy at his persevering opposition, 'that were I to remain alone at Groenenwald, it would be impossible for me to receive visits from our friend, either in his own house or this?'

'Why impossible, Margaret? You are a woman in years —a sage in prudence. Why not see him as usual?'

'Because the foreign world is more rigid than our own

on points of propriety; I should be taxed with want of deference to the decorums of life.'

'Since you are so prudish,' resumed her father, almost with a smile, 'invite Lady Shoreham and her daughter to become your inmates.'

'They would not come; and even were I to make so great a sacrifice of comfort——'

'At least,' cried Barnsley, peevishly interrupting her, 'you will admit that a visit to Clapton would be somewhat less likely to accelerate the object I have at heart, than a residence at Groenenwald; where, if debarred from seeing you, the Prince would have hourly cognisance of your movements.'

'My dear father, your earnestness requires me to be more explicit,' replied Margaret, firmly. 'Apprehensive of giving you pain, I seem to have encouraged the unlucky error into which you have fallen. Yet such was not my intention. I have never wished to deceive you. I must not suffer you to deceive yourself. Know, therefore, that after the most mature deliberation,—after vainly struggling with my feelings,—after labouring to persuade myself that the time was come for accepting so moderate a share of happiness as awaits the woman wedded to one whom she may esteem but cannot love, I have made up my mind to decline once more, and for ever, the proposals of Prince d'Artenberg. Nay, I am satisfied that I could even better bear to see our good friend unhappy as the husband of Lucilla Drewe, than render him so myself by my indifference.'

'You intend, in short, to refuse him! Unhappy girl! What *right* have you thus to trifle with your happiness,—*with mine?* Margaret, my health has long been declining! You must perceive it, child. You *must* see that infirmities of mind and body are hastening me towards my end. My brother, you hear, is on his death-bed; a few short months, dear Margaret, will bring me to mine. Judge, then, what comfort it would have afforded my closing eyes, to fix them, in my last moments, upon the prosperity of my child!'

'What prosperity can I desire more than that with which Providence has blessed me?' faltered Margaret, pressing her father's folded hands to her bosom, and moistening them with tears; 'do not—do not afflict me thus.'

'Still, you will need protection!' replied Barnsley, affected by her emotion, but not to be entreated from his purpose. 'You are young, beautiful; will *you*, who fear to pass a few poor weeks alone at Groenenwald, confront unsupported the trials and perils of the world? No—no, Margaret; no—no, my poor dear daughter; I cannot leave you unprotected. I cannot die in peace unless I see you the wife of——'

Margaret threw herself into his arms, perhaps to forestall his declaration. 'Grant me but a short time longer for reflection,' she whispered. 'This visit to England may bring about strange changes in our destinies. Do not deny me the happiness I have long denied myself—a short renewal of intercourse with those I love.'

'Be it so!' replied Barnsley, releasing himself from her clasping arms. 'I have no right to deny any gratification to the most dutiful of children—to the child who has denied me nothing; yet I confess I should have been glad to use more expedition and privacy on my journey than is compatible with the presence of a female companion.'

'My dear father! you know how indifferent I am to fatigue or personal inconvenience.'

'It was not *that* I meant. No matter. If evil should come of the journey, do not accuse me of having exposed you to it. And now,' he added, interrupting himself, as if apprehensive of being betrayed into saying more, 'the sooner we commence our preparations the better.'

The servants were summoned, and orders given concerning post-horses. It was decided that no attendants should accompany them. The house was given in charge to a confidential *maître d'hôtel*, who had been in their service throughout their residence on the continent; and to *him* Margaret consigned a note of apology to be delivered to Prince d'Artenberg, when he should visit Groenenwald on the morrow. All these matters arranged, Margaret lay down to rest, leaving all further preparation for the journey to the care of her attendant.

She lay down to rest—she even slept; but her slumbers, instead of yielding refreshment to her over-excited mind, brought painful and disquieting dreams. The scenes around her were still around her in her sleep, but not as when her

eyes had closed upon them. She was still at Groenenwald; but Groenenwald was a scene of horror and dismay. Strange faces seemed to surround her, united with the familiar faces of her servants, changed and rendered strange by insult and mockery. All was disturbed and disordered, as at Stokeshill in the day of its desolation. She seemed to rush for explanation to her father's room; and, on arriving there, instead of finding Mr. Barnsley quietly sleeping, he was sitting bound in a chair, while rough-looking men ransacked the papers in his desk and secretaire. He was weeping. Yes! there were actually tears of distress—of despair, upon the old man's withered cheeks.

Margaret started from her pillow at the sight. She was wide awake. She found tears upon her *own* cheeks, wrung from her heart by sight of her father's distress.

'How absurd are dreams!' she murmured, half smiling to herself to find her grief imaginary; 'or rather, how absurd their influence over the mind! As to the illusions themselves, what can be more natural than that the antici pation of our return to England should summon up associations of mortification and regret?'

She rose. Day was already breaking. Involuntarily she turned her eyes towards her father's window, which was overlooked by her own, and through the half-drawn curtains could discern him seated beside his secretaire; while every now and then a sudden blaze from the fireplace announced that the occupation, which, on the eve of a harassing journey, had thus induced him to sacrifice his repose, was the destruction of papers. Mr. Barnsley appeared to be setting his house in order previously to his departure from the place.

Unwilling to intrude upon his privacy, Margaret dressed herself in haste and hastened to the garden, among whose lime-trees the early bees were at work, and the blackbird chaunting his matins. Not a soul was yet stirring. All was solitary, sweet, and gracious. The vines were just in flower on the espaliers, and Margaret repeated to herself, almost aloud, that long before their fruit was clustering she should be again at Groenenwald.

CHAPTER XLII.

For the first few leagues of their journey towards the coast, both father and daughter were too much dispirited for conversation. They were quitting home only for a few weeks, but it was so long since they had uprooted themselves from their happy hearth, and Groenenwald was now in such perfection of rural beauty, that it was like quitting a bride upon her marriage day, or a first-born child nestling in its first day's cradle.

Nor was it till they had passed through Brussels and encountered the stir and bustle of business, that the spell of their reverie was broken. But the Préfecture de Police and banker were to be visited. Margaret suggested that in Colonel Barnsley's critical state of health, they might experience some sudden necessity for expenditure; while all that her father seemed anxious to impress upon her mind was his desire to make as little display as possible during their stay in England, and attract as little attention. Attributing this soreness of feeling to the consciousness of his former humiliations as a bankrupt, his daughter was prompt and earnest in repressing his misgivings.

On the following night, as they drew near the continental close of their journey, Miss Barnsley fancied that the perturbation of her father's mind was aggravated by approaching the scene of his former humiliations. He ceased to talk of his brother, who throughout the journey had engrossed his thoughts. He ceased to revert to Groenenwald, to d'Artenberg, or the friends they were leaving behind; but on entering the hotel at Ostend, seemed absorbed in reminiscences of remoter times. The eventful day when they had first set foot upon the Flemish shore was to him as yesterday. All intervening scenes or interposing persons were forgotten—forgotten his own broken health and altered temper of mind. He was again Jahn Barnsley the bankrupt, flying from the sight of Stokeshill Place; flying from the Westerton election; flying from the contemplation of his misfortunes.

To Margaret the same recollections occurred, but they occurred for joy and exultation. *She* could not but recall to

mind the hard and impenitent spirit in which the mortified man had rebelled against the chastening of heaven, and view with admiration and gratitude the spring of pure water which the touch of the prophet's rod had called forth from the flinty rock. It was now as she could desire with the father whom her soul loved. The world was no longer all in all. He was humble, penitent, tender, bearing and forbearing, giving and forgiving, loving and deserving love. He sometimes seemed to smile with contempt at the recollection of the enthralling charm which the mean interests of life had once usurped over his mind ere he learned that true happiness resides in the interchange of human affections, in the power of doing good to those we love, and the occasion of receiving good at their hands. When Margaret called all this to mind, a flush of joy brightened her cheek. 'How differently now,' she thought, 'will the Heaphys feel towards my poor father! how differently will my father himself feel towards poor Miss Winston!'

If occasionally a thought of Stokeshill Place glanced into her mind, even *that* was now redeemed from mortifying associations. Margaret of Groenenwald was a very different being from the timid, sensitive Margaret of Wynnex Abbey. By her recent modes of life and progress of character, she felt raised to the level of the Woodgates; she knew herself to be as high-minded, as noble in heart, and had learned to understand that true nobility consists in that dignity of mind which herald's offices can neither give nor take away. She felt that she could no longer humble herself in spirit before Helen Woodgate. But when the consciousness of this new and presumptuous mood of feeling developed itself in her mind she checked herself as for a sin, and turned her thoughts elsewhere—to the joy of being clasped in the venerable arms of her friend, and of sitting at the board of those who had been her help and stay in time of trouble.

They sailed. England was soon in sight; and Barnsley's daughter felt the blood flush to her face as she caught the first sight of her native shore. The sound of its familiar tongue would be again in her ears, the aspect of its sweet familiar faces once more before her eyes. *Would* they *could* summon up around her the hopes and illusions of her youth!

The moment of disembarkation from a packet is too much harassed by hurry and importunity for almost any incident to appear extraordinary. Still it *did* strike Margaret with surprise, as she was ascending the ladder from the deck to the pier, that a strange, shabby-looking man should exclaim to another as he stood behind him, 'Here he is, by Jingo! That's old Barnsley in the cap!'

Arrived on *terra firma*, however, she was too vehemently assailed by the agents of the various hotels, to take further note of the individual by whom the exclamation was uttered. The idlers around her were commenting aloud and without ceremony upon her beauty: while ejaculations of 'Be this here your Russia leather case, marm?'—'I say, Jim, strap the myhogyny box upon that 'ere truck, for the Ri'al!'—beset her on every side. She was glad to take her father's arm, drop her veil, and follow the commissioner as speedily as possible to their hotel.

Condemned to an hour's delay, while the carriage was landed and their effects passed through the Custom-house, the travellers sat down quietly to breakfast,—Barnsley having the vast mainsheet of the 'Times' outspread between himself and his daughter, and Margaret having her eyes fixed on that long-forgotten object—an English tea urn,—when the waiter entering the room with an air of dismay, suddenly addressed a half-whisper to Miss Barnsley.

'If you please, ma'am, p'raps you'd better step into your own room. The officers won't be kept from coming in,—and may be 'twould be disagreeable to you to be present.'

'The Custom-house officers, papa!' said Margaret, in reply to the inquiring looks of Barnsley. 'I was not aware that they had a right to search the persons of travellers. Pray let them come in!' she added, addressing herself to the waiter. 'I have no smuggled goods in my possession.'

'Bless your 'eart, ma'am, it ben't the Custumus officers!' replied the man, with flippant familiarity. 'The Custumus never meddles with gentlefolks as puts up in an hotel like ourn.'

'What is the meaning of all this?' inquired Barnsley, laying down the newspaper, on finding that his daughter misunderstood the intimation she had received.

'Why the meaning is, Sir, if so be you insist on my

speaking out afore the lady, as the sheriff's officers have made their way into the hotel, (which is what we're by no means in the 'abit of 'aving 'appen within the doors of such a house as ourn!) and they talk about having a special warrant out again you, Sir.'

'You are under a mistake,' replied Barnsley, calmly. 'I am just arrived from the continent in the Ostend packet, and have not been in England these six years. You are under a mistake.'

'No mistake!' replied the waiter, with a grin. 'Them chaps are fellows too much up to trap, to make a miss of their man.'

'Get out of the room, Sir!'—cried Barnsley, incensed by his familiarity, 'and be careful another time how you take these liberties with a stranger.'

The waiter, enraged rather than abashed by this reprimand, retreated only so far as the door; and, having beckoned to some persons in the hall, the two men noticed by Margaret on the pier pushed their way into the room, followed by a third person, of a somewhat higher class of life, who bent down on his entrance towards the baggage standing near the door, and read aloud the superscription of 'John Barnsley, Esq.'—then exclaimed with a knowing wink to the waiter—'Ay, ay! all's straight! I knew we were on the right lay.'

Astonished beyond expression at these proceedings, Margaret did not notice that the first man who entered the room had his hand upon her father's shoulder. The only sound she heard was Mr. Barnsley's exclamation of 'Arrest me! you are under a mistake! Take care what you are about.'

'No fear o' that, Squire Barnsley,' replied the man; 'I recollect you well enough, though you be too great a gen'leman to remember the likes o' me. Mayhap you'll just give a hint to the young lady to make herself scarce, and then we'll proceed to business.'

'There is some misunderstanding which will be immediately cleared up,' said Barnsley, addressing the terrified Margaret. 'Retire, my love, to your own room, and I will let you know when these people are gone.'

'When these people be gone!—I say, Ben, that be a good'un—eh?'

'Let me remain with you, father,' faltered Margaret; and, perceiving Mr. Barnsley's countenance assume a ghastly paleness she hastily filled him a glass of water. 'Let me remain with you. You know I am not nervous. If you send me away at such a moment, I shall be miserable!'

And retiring from the table, she seated herself in the window-seat with such an air of resolution, that the men seemed to make up their minds to her presence.

'You ha'nt kept us long on the wait, Mr. Barnsley,' said one of the men, in an insolent tone. 'We've only been on the look-out sin' last night. Muster Adams there, (hallo, Ben! come for'ard and show yoursel to an old acquaintance,) Muster Adams said you was as sure to run on the springe, as a weazle into's hole.'

'Produce your warrant,' said Barnsley, in a low composed voice, apparently apprised by the presence of Closeman's former clerk, Ben Adams, the nephew of old Dobbs, of the nature of the charge against him. And, after casting his eyes upon the document, the man of business at once recognised its authority.

'A special warrant, Squire, signed by old Parson Drewe and young Squire Holloway,' observed one of the men.

'Where am I to go,—whither are you to conduct me?' he demanded, with the same unnatural composure.

'Bless you, Squire, you seem to have left your wits in forrun parts!—To Maidston, Sir, to be sure; and may be a'terwards to jail, where you've sent many a good fellow in your time; and more by token my own father's son—a better nor ever stood in your shoes—for having a hare or two in his possession; only he wur 'quitted innicent as the child unborn at the werry next 'sizes, (which is more I take it than you'll be yourself, tho'f you should bide in quod till doomsday!) So now you've my mind upon the matter!—'

'Hold your tongue, Sandys; you have no right to be saucy,' said his companion, reproaching the Westerton constable, who was paying off his private grudges; 'I advise you to mind your manners, or the Bow Street gentleman what'll be here immegently will make you sing small.'

At this announcement, Barnsley experienced a gleam of satisfaction. Of Ben Adams he entertained a deep-rooted detestation; and his memory was by this time sufficiently

refreshed to recollect Bill Sandys the constable, as one of his most strenuous Westerton antagonists. But a Bow Street officer being comparatively what he was pointedly designated by Bill Sandys' coadjutor, 'a Bow Street gentleman,' he waited in earnest expectation of the arrival of one who might perhaps be conciliated to some stretch of courtesy.

But when Goddard the officer entered the room, and Barnsley proffered his request of being conveyed to Maidstone through London, as he had an only brother on his death-bed, a smile passed over the face of the experienced official, seconded by a burst of laughter from Sandys and Adams.

'I say, Ben! the bait took, 'e see!' cried Sandys. 'The Squire ra'ally believed that 'ere letter of yourn war writ by his brother!—Ho!—Ho!—Ho!'

'Don't put yourself into no sort of trouble on the Colonel's account, Mr. Barnsley,' added Adams. 'The Colonel's safe, sound, and blazing hot in Calcutta! 'Twas the solicitors of Closeman and Co.'s estate, who, having a word or two to say to you in public, put Mr. Richard Dobbs up to a decoy. —No offence, I hope?'

'Enough!' exclaimed Barnsley, tortured by the idea that expressions such as these should reach the ears of his daughter. 'It is not to *you* I have to exculpate myself. The unjustifiable means by which you——but no matter!—You will have no objection, Sir,' he added, addressing Goddard, 'to my proceeding to Maidstone in my own carriage, which will be here in less than an hour?'

'None in the world, Sir, if you prefer it. I should recommend, however, for privacy's sake, a hack-chaise. But just as you please. You are of course aware, Sir, that I must accompany you; that neither myself nor these gentlemen must lose sight of you?—I wish to impose no unnecessary restraint. But my duty requires me not to quit you, till I deposit you in the custody to which at present you stand committed.'

'Sir, I offer no resistance,—I make no complaint,'—replied Barnsley, faintly, but steadily. 'I only request that you will dismiss those persons for a moment, that I may have a few minutes' interview with my daughter.'

'Wait without; I have my eye upon the gentleman; all's safe!' said the London official, motioning with an air of authority his provincial brethren to retire; and retreating to the further corner of the room; ostensibly directing his attention to a splendidly-framed portrait of the Duchess of Kent and Princess Victoria, which formed the prospectively loyal ornament of the apartment.

But when Barnsley, relieved from the hateful presence of the myrmidons of the law, turned from the table on which he had been leaning towards the window-seat into which Margaret had sunk at the commencement of that dreadful scene, he saw at once that his alarm lest his daughter's feelings should be wounded by the insolent coarseness of his foes, was superfluous. Margaret was insensible to what was passing before her. She had not fainted. She sat stiff, and cold, and pale as marble; her eyes fixed, her lips motionless. She had watched with the most intense agony the expression of her father's countenance. It was *there* she was to read his sentence of 'Guilty' or 'Not guilty,'—not in the award of the law; and the moment she discerned from his mournful submissiveness of deportment, that the accusation, sufficiently serious to deprive him of liberty, was not groundless, despair came upon her soul! Her heart died within her! The past was revealed to her as by an electric influence; her father's mental agonies, his secret remorse, his premature decrepitude,—all was now explained.

At that moment Barnsley was moving sedately across the room; but, when his impaired sight discovered the ghastly immobility of his daughter, he rushed towards her, encircled her frantically with his arms, and, clasping her wildly to his bosom, called aloud upon her name.

'Margaret! my child! speak to me! answer me!' he cried. But Margaret answered not, nor heeded his impetuous endearments.

'Great God! her senses are bewildered! she is dying—she will expire!' cried Barnsley. And the kind-hearted officer, who had purposely averted his eyes from them, and concluded that the passionate exclamations which partially reached his ear were such as he heard called forth, only too often, by the frightful scenes he was in the habit of witnessing, now crossed the room to his assistance; and perceiving,

in a second, the almost palsied condition of the young lady, flew to the door to dispatch the persons waiting without for female assistance and medical advice. But, before either could be procured, Margaret, clasped again and again to the bosom of her miserable father, and sprinkled with water by the well-meaning zeal of her attendant, became gradually conscious of her situation. The fixedness of her eyes,—the rigidity of her muscles relaxed; and, raising her hand, she passed it softly and caressingly over her father's face.

'Thank God!—She knows me! she is coming to herself!' cried the unhappy man. And, thus relieved from his worst apprehensions, his sense of his own degraded position returned, and involuntarily he wrung his hands in bitter anguish. 'Yet why,—oh! why should I wish her restored to the knowledge of her father's wretchedness,—her father's shame!' faltered Barnsley; and, kneeling down beside his noble child, he took her two hands in his and bathed them with his tears.

Goddard, meanwhile, having received at the door the requisite restoratives for the sufferer, and with considerate delicacy declined in her name the attendance which in his momentary panic he had summoned, kept lingering as far as possible out of sight and hearing of the tender exhortations passing between the father and his child.

'My Margaret, support yourself!—for *my* sake, exert your fortitude! All will yet be well. I promise you that all shall yet be well!'

'Do not think of *me*,' murmured her hoarse accents in reply.—'Think of yourself!—What is to be done?—*Whose* help is to be summoned?—whose justice, whose mercy invoked? Father, I dare not ask who is your enemy—I dare not inquire the nature of your peril!'

Barnsley moaned heavily, as if all explanation was impossible.

'But if it be *thus*,' resumed Margaret in French, hoping not to be understood by their companion, and inferring from her father's gestures the guiltiness of his cause,—'if it be *thus*, we have a resource. I am rich,—you have often reminded me of my independence. Surely my fortune will buy off these people. Escape is still possible. A packet is about to sail for Dunkirk. In a few hours you might be in

safety, and the secret of your arrival in England would never transpire.'

Barnsley shook his head.

'You know nothing of such matters,' he replied. 'The fellow Adams has more at stake than any bribe in our power to offer. No, Margaret, I must submit!—I must bear my cross in humility; I must go through with my appointed trial. Do not despair. My worst pang in parting from you, Margaret, arises from the necessity of leaving you to pursue your journey unprotected.'

'*Leaving* me,' reiterated the trembling girl.

'Ah! why were you not persuaded? why did you persist in quitting Groenenwald? Horrible forebodings even then apprised me of the evil that has befallen us!'

'Rather let us thank Heaven you have not been suffered to meet them alone.'

'Half their bitterness had then been spared me!' ejaculated poor Barnsley.

'No, no, father! You cannot think it—you cannot mean it! Your consolation lies in your child. Only tell me that your consolation lies in your child!'

'*It does!*' replied Barnsley, with solemn earnestness; 'but dreadful is the strait, Margaret, that requires such consolation. You shrink from the thought of our separation. Are you aware whither they are about to convey your father?'

Margaret shuddered, but could not reply.

'To a court of criminal justice—perhaps to a felon's cell!'

'Whither thou goest, I will go,' answered his daughter, involuntarily using the words of Scripture.

'Not if you would serve me, Margaret. You must instantly repair to London. You must see John Heaphy,—you must bring him down to me; or, rather, for the time is short—the assizes must be approaching,—let him bring down to me the best legal adviser he can engage.'

'But what explanation can I offer to my cousin?' inquired Miss Barnsley, after a momentary pause: 'he will require particulars that I am unable to afford,—he will desire to know ——'

'Tell him,' interrupted Barnsley, again speaking in French, and apparently forgetting that the charge not having

been circumstantially explained to himself he admitted by this anticipation his consciousness of guilt,—'tell him that I am accused of having forged the deed of settlement conveying the Stokeshill estates to yourself upon the death of your mother, and that I trust to *him* to assist in proving my innocence. It is above all things essential that I should see him with the least possible delay.'

'At least, suffer me to accompany you to Maidstone before I proceed to London,—the delay will be but of a few hours.'

'A few hours are of vital importance. I would fain see my nephew previously to my examination. Lose not a moment, my dear child,—my dear friend. The sum of money in your desk,' said he, with a significant glance, 'is your own. The carriage is prepared for the journey. You have presence of mind and courage for the enterprise. And now, if you love me, leave me alone with these people, who have duties to perform and seem disposed to perform them with moderation. Farewell! it is but till to-morrow, Margaret, it is but till to-morrow,' he continued, fondling her hands in *his* hands, and, though striving to inspire her with fortitude, unable to repress the tears that streamed down his withered cheeks.

But Margaret understood his wishes,—understood her duty,—understood the urgency of the case, and rose, resolved to command her feelings, and prepared to exert herself in his behalf. Already, with a sort of stupified distraction, she had advanced several steps towards the door, when an impulse, apparently less mechanical, prompted her to return and kneel down by the side of her father, who had sunk into the seat she had quitted, concealing his eyes with a trembling hand, beneath which hot bitter tears were stealing down his face.

The movement of Margaret could not fail, however, to attract his attention; but, without removing the hand by which the disturbance of his countenance was concealed, he laid the other silently upon her head,—and that unspoken benediction was balm to the wounded soul of his daughter!

CHAPTER XLIII.

It was ten o'clock at night before Margaret Barnsley passed through the suburbs of London, on her way to her cousin's residence. The same moonlight which, three nights before, had seemed to shed peace and hope upon the silent woods of Groenenwald, rendered all clear as daylight during the last few miles of her road. But she did not mark the transition from its pure and mild radiance to the glaring lamps of the metropolis. Her eyes were blinded, and her soul was deadened with much grief. She had pondered and pondered upon her trials—past, present, and to come,—till thought itself appeared exhausted.

But, as she approached the dwelling of her cousin, the necessity of rousing herself for explanation prompted her to wipe the cold heavy dew from her forehead, and recall to mind that her duty towards her unhappy parent was a duty of self-exertion. The family at Clapton had retired to rest. An angry watch-dog alone acknowledged her postboy's ring at the gate. At length, John Heaphy appeared in person at the wicket, to admonish the intruders at such an hour that they were under a mistake; then to exclaim, with a suddenly brightened countenance, 'Heighday! my cousin, Margaret! Better late than never, my dear girl,—come in. What in the world has brought you to England?'

He now led the way cordially to the drawing-room, where, having dismissed his wife and daughter to rest after an evening lesson from the volume which, with its silver clasps unclosed, still lay upon the table, the good man had been sitting at the open window contemplating the solemn stillness of the midnight sky, when startled by her arrival. Having placed her in a chair, John Heaphy bade her once more heartily welcome to England; and, in a few minutes, his wife hurried back into the room, to be overjoyed in her turn, and amazed, and inquisitive.

'I quitted you in sorrow and in sorrow am I come to you again!'—was Margaret's reply to the friends, whose arms were thus spontaneously opened to receive her.

'In trouble?—*you?*'—exclaimed John Heaphy, knitting

his brows. 'Your face tells me that you are not making a jest of us, Margaret; or I should remind you that scarce a week since, your letters announced your father and yourself to be in the enjoyment of perfect health and felicity. — *What* has befallen you?'

'Misfortunes I have not courage to relate!' she replied, in accents hoarse with anguish.

'Ah! Margaret, my dear child,' exclaimed Heaphy, terrified out of his usual composure by the sight of such profound affliction; 'you would not be forewarned, you would not tarry in England, you would not come home to us! What good *could* arise from this long sojourning in the tents of Belial?'

And in a milder voice Mrs. Heaphy reiterated, 'You should have come to us before, my dear girl; you should have come home to us!'

'I am here only too soon at last!' said Margaret, with a deep sigh. She paused. It was so difficult—it was so *hard* to avow the truth! She knew that the Heaphys did not love her father. She felt that their judgment would be harsh; and, on trying to give utterance to an entreaty for charitable interpretation, burst into tears.

'Compose yourself, sit down and compose yourself!' said the kind-hearted Heaphy, drawing aside to leave her time for the recovery of her self-possession.

'No more composure in this world for *me!*' was her emphatic reply, inviting her cousins to re-approach. 'I am more heavily visited than I can bear! My father is in prison! My father is about to be put on his trial for a capital crime!'

'My uncle Barnsley in prison?' cried John, 'in prison in *England?*'

Margaret bowed her head in the affirmative.

'The Lord pardon me! But I ever misdoubted he had secret sins to answer for!' was his next involuntary exclamation.

'He has to answer a cruel and groundless accusation!' said Margaret, with kindling spirit. 'Let not his nearest kinsman be the first to wag a finger against him.'

'Of what is your father accused?' inquired Heaphy, too full of compassion to resent the petulance of his young friend.

But Margaret was silent.

'On what charge is my unfortunate uncle committed?' said Heaphy again, fancying she had not heard his first inquiry.

But still, Margaret found it impossible to answer. She was struggling for words in which to frame her statement most favourably for her father.

'They accuse him of having forged the deed by which Stokeshill was secured from Closeman's creditors,' said she, after some further hesitation.

'Closeman's creditors!' interrupted Heaphy. 'Do you mean the deed of which I am trustee? the deed executed five-and-twenty years ago, by Winchmore and my father? Absurd! preposterous! You deceive yourself, my dear Margaret, or others have in charity attempted to deceive you.'

'Nay,—it is as I tell you. The assignees of Closeman's estate have got up this tardy accusation. A relation of Mr. Dobbs, a man named Adams, who was in Closeman's banking-house, appears to be the conductor of the business.'

'Adams?' interrupted Heaphy. 'A short, hard-featured chap? Ay! I recollect his raising objections against the trust at the first meeting of your father's creditors. I recollect his being reproved by the commissioners for showing a bad spirit, at the time the docket was taken off. And now I think on't, he must be the very fellow who so repeatedly called here last year, to obtain the address of the executors of the late Mr. Winchmore, doubtless to obtain access to his papers! And this person, you say, accuses your father of having *forged* the deed of trust?'

'But what interest could poor Mr. Barnsley possibly have in forging a deed which conveyed his property away from himself?' remonstrated the simple-hearted Mrs. Heaphy.

'Pho, pho! His *interest* is plain enough:—let us hope his innocence may be made half as apparent. That deed secured to Margaret the means of saving himself and her from beggary; or the estate would have been subjected to the claims of the creditors for the remainder of my uncle's life.'

Mrs. Heaphy looked sorry to be convinced.

'I recollect examining the trust deed, I thought I recog-

nised my father's handwriting. I would have said so, if put on my oath!' said John Heaphy, waxing sore as the notion developed itself that, if the accusation were maintained by proof, *he* might be suspected of connivance in Barnsley's malefactions. 'But my uncle knew I was no man of business. It will, perhaps, turn out that the attorney was too deep for me! Yet who would have been on the look out against fraud in a blood relation?'

'Nothing is proved—John!—nothing is proved!' gently remonstrated his wife, moved by womanly sympathy in Margaret's mortification at the ready belief accorded by her cousin to the charge against her father.

'Well begun is half done!' replied Heaphy. 'Special warrants are not granted, unless in cases of strong proof and great emergence. Things look black for John Barnsley; and, should the fact be proved, nothing but some sneaking artifice of lawyer-work, such as perhaps his own experience will suggest, can save him from transportation.'

'*From transportation!*' cried Margaret, starting up and clasping her hands in ecstacy. 'Are you *sure* that his sentence would be only transportation?—I thought I had heard—I have been bringing to my mind all day some vague connexion between *forgery*—and—*death*—I—I fancied——'

And, hiding her face in her hands, she laughed aloud in an hysterical paroxysm of joy, to think that the father to whom she owed her existence, would be spared the horrors of an ignominious death! Any other sentence of punishment she could share with him, and lighten to his endurance. She could go forth with him into shame and banishment. She could modify the rigours of *transportation*. Her mind was now comparatively at ease.

Margaret was recalled from these wild ideas by the voice of her cousin, expressing in an undertone to his wife, unlimited indignation at having been made the dupe and tool of his uncle.

'John Barnsley has injured my father's honest name by involving it in such a transaction!' cried he. 'He has disgraced his sister's son by placing me in a situation to be committed as an accomplice—a confederate in his crime. I know my innocence and put my trust in God to make it manifest; no thanks to my uncle Barnsley.'

'But should he be able to prove the authenticity of the deed?'

'He will *not!* The more I think of it all, the more apparent becomes the probability of such a charge: I am only amazed at my previous blindness. But I never *was*, I never pretended to be. a man of business!'

'John!' said his wife, reproachfully, 'you seem to have forgotten the presence of the afflicted one.'

'I had indeed, you do well to remind me!' cried Heaphy, with contrition; and going towards Margaret he affectionately seized her hand. 'But she must be ours now. This must be her home, and *we* her parents. Margaret! forgive me if I have appeared harsh; trust me that, in spite of my bluntness, you have not a truer or a warmer friend!'

'Prove it, then, by rendering service to my father! Deal more charitably with one who is in the sorest state of adversity!' said Margaret, mildly. 'You must hasten down to him, cousin. You must secure him legal advice. You must bear witness in his favour.'

'What witness *can* I bear? I showed my faith in him by acting upon the deed he produced. If, on re-examination, I should have reason to doubt the authenticity of the signature purporting to be my father's, do you think I would make an affirmation against the dictates of my conscience?'

Barnsley's daughter cast down her eyes, and was silent.

'Margaret! I would not do it for my wife—I would not do it for my child—I would not do it to forward the interests of my creed, or of my country!—It is written, thou shalt not do evil that good may come!'

'You will perhaps refuse to assist me in procuring legal aid for my father?' said Margaret, with dignity.

'I am little versed in law, God be thanked! I am acquainted with no lawyer,' said Heaphy, petulantly. Then, as if reproving himself for his uncharitable irritability, he added—'Where *is* my uncle, dear Margaret,—and when do you return to him?'

'This moment, if you will bear me company. He is at Maidstone, he is in custody, he bade me lose no time in bringing you to his assistance.'

And it needed very little further appeal to the Christian

sympathies of the rough but humane man, to determine him to compliance. It was in vain that the Heaphys tried to persuade Margaret to pause for rest and refreshment. The motherly matron fancied, in her singular ignorance of the business of life, that no harm could arise to Barnsley from Margaret's enjoyment of what she called 'a comfortable nap.' But her husband knew better; satisfied that no time was to be lost, he coincided in Margaret's activity, and they were soon journeying in the cool of the night, along a road which leading as it did to Maidstone through the town of Westerton, and past the palings of Stokeshill Place, was only too mournfully familiar to Margaret Barnsley.

She was happier indeed, or rather, she was less sunk in despair, than previously to her interview with her cousin. The one fixed idea of a death of shame, was removed; and all the alternatives that presented themselves, appeared vague and undistinguishable. From time to time during their progress, Heaphy burst forth into ejaculations, sometimes of anger against her father, sometimes of compassion towards herself, sometimes of pity for poor Sir Clement Barnsley, who was expected in England by the autumn fleet, after the recent hard won acquirement of his military honours.

'We shall pass, I fancy, through the very town your father represented in Parliament,' said he, as the silvery moonlight began to fade into the grey glimmer of a summer dawn.—'Nay, we shall surely pass by Stokeshill Place itself,' added he, with a gesture of pity. 'Stokeshill,—Stokeshill Place! The Lord forgive us!' What a load of sin and shame has that accursed spot entailed upon my unfortunate kinsman! Unchristianly was the pride which originally prompted him to make it his, and discard from its gates the flesh and blood whom he thought might disparage him in the eyes of his grand country neighbours; and behold! the same pride at length induced him to put his life in jeopardy, his soul in peril, that he might dishonestly retain it in the family!'—

And turning towards Margaret as he concluded these reflections, which burst involuntarily, not maliciously, from his lips, he perceived that her swollen eyes were closed.

'She is asleep, poor soul!' thought the good man, the

righteousneas of whose soul far exceeded its sensibility. He did not suspect that his cousin's eyes were shut against the coming day, because its light was loathsome to her; or that she had sealed her ears against his inveteracy, lest she might speak more warmly than facts could justify in defence of her father.

'I have been thinking, Margaret,' observed he, when, after an hour's silence between them, the morning sun streamed too brightly upon her face to admit of further supposition that she was asleep: 'I have been thinking over all the incidents connected with that deed, with the disposal of your mother's property, with the sale of Stokeshill; and some inconclusive recollection recurs to me that the trust deed was attached as a necessary portion of the title deeds to the conveyance of the estate. It is vitally important that I should have a sight of the instrument. I should not be sorry for a conference with the young man who purchased the property—(Woodhill—Woods—what was his name? A knight or baronet if I remember?)—Does he reside at the Place, my dear? Do you know anything about him?'

'Of late, very little. The purchaser of Stokeshill Place was a Sir Henry Woodgate, from whose grandfather it was originally bought by my father. If any material advantage to my father could arise from a communication between you, we change horses at Westerton—you might probably obtain an interview. The hour is unseasonable for such a visit; but, at such a crisis, ceremony is out of the question.'

'I will, at least, make the attempt—I would fain be a little prepared. As to the *form* of the business, *you* can explain to the gentleman the urgency of the case, which will plead its own apology.'

'*I* explain? Nay! *I* cannot go to Stokeshill Place!' faltered Margaret. 'Do not ask it of me—do not expect it of me. You will make yourself understood by Sir Henry Woodgate far better than,'—

'Margaret Barnsley!' interrupted her cousin, laying his hand, not sternly but impressively on her arm; 'what judgment shall we form of you if we find you shrink from the first of the long series of ordeals that await your father's daughter? What right have you to demand sacrifices from

others in his behalf, while you deny him so trifling a service of your own?'

'You are right!' said Margaret, again closing her eyes, as if seeking courage and patience in self-concentration. 'I *will* go to Stokeshill Place! Bear with me yet awhile, cousin: I am not yet sufficiently schooled by the trying uses of adversity.'

CHAPTER XLIV.

The kine were lowing in the pastures and the hinds plodding to their early labours of the day, when, after a change of horses at Westerton, the carriage conveying Heaphy and Miss Barnsley on their heart-breaking errand, turned from the high road and entered the lodge-gates of Stokeshill Place.

Overpowered by a long continuance of watchfulness, fatigue, and mental struggles, Margaret Barnsley derived no new pang from the aspect of the spot. She was dead in soul to all trivial associations. The house of which she had dreamed in her dreams, and for a glimpse of which she had yearned in her waking hours, was before her, around her, and she was scarcely conscious of the fact! John Heaphy looked forth indeed upon the venerable old trees and fertile glades of the park, and rendered homage to the merits of Stokeshill; but to the chastened spirit of her who had sported in happy childhood on its green lawns, all, all was a blank.

The carriage had been reluctantly admitted by the lodge-keeper, on Heaphy's pleading urgent business with Sir Henry Woodgate; but, as it approached the house gate, a gardener who from the shrubbery had stood watching its progress with wonder, hastened to arrest the further advance of the intruders.

'I beg your pardon, Sir,' said he, addressing Heaphy, 'but no carriages be admitted at present to come nigh the house, you ben't aware, perhaps, that my lady be very ill? Sir Henry don't receive no visits, 'cause Lady Woodgate can't abear the slightest disturbance.'

'How unfortunate!' exclaimed Heaphy. 'But if I pro-

ceed to the house on foot,' he resumed, addressing the zealous domestic, 'and send in a letter to Sir Henry?'

'I think your honour'd better defer it till another day. There 've been two Doctors, Sir, besides old Mr. Squills of Westerton called in sin' Sunday.'

'Bernard Smith!' faltered Margaret, raising herself to press forward and show her face; and though the gardener could by no means recognise that care-crazed countenance, the well-remembered voice reached his heart in a minute.

'Don't you remember me, Bernard?'

'*Miss Barnsley!*—Lord, lord! I ask your pardon, Miss. I should be an ungrateful fellow indeed if I'd forgot you. I humbly ask your pardon.'

'Run, Bernard, to the house, and inquire of Sir Henry Woodgate if he could grant me the great favour of an immediate interview,' interrupted Margaret; conscious amid all her bewilderment of the importance of every passing minute to her father. And, following the instructions of the gardener, who hastened to do her errand, the postboy leisurely resumed his road up the hill; stopping at length at the point where the sound of their approach might become audible at the house, and annoying to the invalid Lady Woodgate.

'Poor Stokeshill!' mused Margaret, reverting to the youth and prosperity of Helen, which had not sufficed to preserve her from the insidious attacks of disease, 'Misfortune seems to set its seal upon every human being connected with Stokeshill!'

In a few minutes, Bernard Smith returned with a satisfactory message. 'Sir Henry Woodgate would have much pleasure in receiving Miss Barnsley.'

At their own suggestion, however, the travellers alighted to walk to the house; and as the overjoyed gardener attended them pointing out improvements to Margaret as they went along, and apologising for alterations, he was all amazement to perceive how little she seemed affected by the destinies of a spot she had once appeared to love so dearly.

'Miss Barnsley seems to be in sad trouble; it be all no doubt on my poor lady's account!' thought he, recurring to the early friendship between Helen and Margaret. But when as they drew near to the hall door and passed close to

the group of Lady Woodgate's children, just issuing forth full of mirth and spirits with their nurses into the brightness of the summer morning, the young heir, a noble dark-haired boy of six, a lovely curly-headed girl, and a babe in a flowing mantle; and the careless visitor still gave no sign of notice or interest, Bernard Smith was disappointed. It was clear that her heart and its sorrows was not with the Woodgates. She was now ushered into the library—*that library!* and in two minutes Sir Henry in his dressing-gown hurried into the room; when the deep concern expressed in his countenance, indicating that he was in some measure aware of the circumstances producing the visit of the tra vellers, saved them a world of humiliating explanations.

'I learnt with exceeding sorrow yesterday from one of my brother-magistrates, the occurrence in your family,' said Woodgate, hastily addressing Margaret in a low compassionate voice, as if to spare her the pain of entering upon the subject: 'the intelligence and the rumours by which it was preceded, are in fact the origin of Lady Woodgate's indisposition. She has long been in a delicate state, and this sad news has completely overset her; which must plead my excuse for the ungracious mode in which you have been received. Can I do anything to serve you?' he added abruptly, fancying that Margaret appeared impatient of his apologies.

But to utter a syllable in reply, was out of her power. The voice of Woodgate, softened to words of such kindness —his manner subdued by a tone of such deference—affected her more than she had been prepared for. So differently had she been accosted within the last four-and-twenty hours, even by those united to her by ties of consanguinity, that she felt grateful for his consideration. Inviting her cousin, by an anxious look and gesture, to enter upon the motive of their visit, she threw herself back, half stupified, into her chair; while John Heaphy, in the straightforward style suggested by his plain good sense, told all he had to tell, and asked all he had to inquire.

But he was disappointed of obtaining all he had hoped to compass by the interview. John Heaphy's knowledge of legal usages proved to be as circumscribed as he had himself the preceding evening announced it. A *copy* of the

trust deed truly, had been assigned to Sir Henry Woodgate; and even that was deposited with his London solicitors.

'I am able to answer you with the greater accuracy,' observed Woodgate, 'having been lately on the eve of disposing of the estate. Stokeshill will be grievously cut up by our projected railroad; and Lady Woodgate, who has long decided the spot to be injurious to her health, is desirous of getting rid of the property. On this account, it became indispensable to look to our title; and the confusion likely to be created by the recent discovery,' added he, in a lower voice, 'has produced feelings of disappointment highly injurious to her enfeebled state of health.'

Though much of this was lost on Margaret, she heard enough to comprehend that Sir Henry was eager to get rid of Stokeshill Place.

'But if you really wish to be disencumbered of the estate,' cried she, starting from her lethargy, 'why not at once cancel the sale; why not annihilate the deed of conveyance? The purchase-money you originally paid, is still forthcoming. Resign the property to *me*, and it will be in my power to meet the claims of the assignees, and perhaps suspend their proceedings against my father.'

'Softly, softly!' cried John Heaphy, while a glance of satisfaction brightened the countenance of Sir Henry. 'You talk like a child, Margaret,—you talk like a woman; you know even less of law than I know myself. You will ruin yourself, without exculpating your father. As far as I comprehend the extent to which Mr. Barnsley is implicated, an authenticated copy of the original deed, giving *him* a life-interest in the Stokeshill estates, has been lately discovered by the fellow Adams among the papers of the late Winchmore, one of the trustees. The existence of this copy (a strong presumption against him) must have been overlooked by your father when, on the discovery of his bankruptcy, he substituted for the original a deed framed according to his own inventions.'

'I cannot allow you thus to take his guilt for granted,' cried Margaret, impatient of this accusation in presence of Sir Henry Woodgate.

'We will not argue upon it now; I am supposing a case. Under such circumstances, the deed must be *somewhere* de-

posited. It is clearly not in Sir Henry Woodgate's possession; it is certainly not in mine. After being exhibited and attested at the meeting of Closeman's creditors, it was withdrawn for the purpose of completing the sale of Stokeshill. What became of it afterwards? My mind misgives me that if indeed guilty of the fraud, John Barnsley was too apt a man of business, to suffer it to remain in existence! It is impossible to say what evidence these Dobbs' people may have in their hands; but I should infer that, if the original be still available for their purpose, your father will have counter-evidence to produce of its authenticity.'

'You think so?' cried Margaret, clasping her hands in rapture, while Sir Henry, better acquainted with the evidence adduced before the magistrates, was gravely silent.

'My father would in that case be acquitted,—acquitted without a stain on his character?' cried the sanguine girl. 'The sale of Stokeshill executed by my trustees would be valid, and I should be at liberty to take it off your hands!'

'Make no such idle propositions!' said Heaphy, sternly. 'The property, by this gentleman's admission, has already fallen in value; and—'

'I rather fear it might prove augmented beyond Miss Barnsley's inclination for the purchase,' said Sir Henry. 'I have increased the domain by re-purchasing family property to a larger extent than was altogether prudent; for the embarrassments arising from these acquisitions form in some degree the motive of Lady Woodgate's desire to get rid of the property. I say this *in confidence*,' added he, addressing Heaphy, 'conceiving you, Sir, to be the legal adviser of Miss Barnsley.'

'Her near relative and kindest friend!' interrupted Margaret, looking affectionately upon the uncouth figure of her cousin, whose singular costume might have justified a far more disparaging inference than that of Woodgate. 'But I need not detain you further,' added Miss Barnsley, starting from her chair and moving towards the door. 'We are hastening to Maidstone,—to my father! My cousin's expectations of obtaining from you information favourable to his interests, alone induced us to turn aside and harass you by this intrusion. Your kindness must make excuses for the liberty.'

And while Heaphy gruffly subscribed to her apologies after Margaret had preceded him out of the room, Sir Henry took a friendly leave of the blunt stranger whom the beautiful and afflicted daughter of his former colleague had pointed out as a kinsman.

'Be kind to her; be careful of her,' said Sir Henry, in hurried accents, perceiving Miss Barnsley to have quitted the library. 'A grievous trial awaits her! No hope of establishing the innocence of her father. Unless some flaw in his indictment, or other informality should favour his escape, the law will go hard with poor Barnsley.'

While this brief explanation was passing between Woodgate and his mortified visitor, Margaret, on her way to the carriage, was encountering an unexpected annoyance.

The secret of her father's arrest not having transpired at Westerton, Bernard Smith, unaware of her motives for desiring her visit to be secret, found it impossible not to circulate the glad intelligence of Miss Barnsley's arrival, among certain old pensioners—certain hangers-on at the Place—to whom the recollection of her gentle virtues was doubly endeared by the contrast afforded by Lady Woodgate's haughty demeanour; and the recollection of her liberal benefactions, by contrast arising from the embarrassed finances of Sir Henry. United in a joyous group to bid her welcome, these people awaited her approach to the carriage; while Bernard Smith, hat in hand, and holding a hastily gathered bunch of her favourite flowers in his hand, was stationed beside the steps to bid her farewell.

'These roses be cut from the last trees as you planted in Stokeshill churchyard, Miss Barnsley,' said he. 'No offence I hope. The old sexton being dead, I took them in charge; and they are matted in winter and watered in summer, as reg'lar as when poor Simon was alive.'

'From the churchyard!—from my mother's grave!' was Margaret's only comment; and accepting the disastrous omen, she thanked him, and placed them in her bosom. 'You will do me a favour, Bernard,' said she, after conquering her emotion sufficiently to say a few conciliatory words to those who were showering blessings on her head, 'by saying nothing at Westerton of this visit. I have no time

to explain—no matter!—I shall soon, soon be among you again. Good bye.'

And she sprang into the carriage, elated almost to wildness by the gleam of hope in her father's favour suggested by John Heaphy, who took his place by her side, amazed and sorrowful to behold her thus groundlessly exulting.

'It was necessary to caution the poor fellow,' said she, attributing her cousin's air of surprise to the charge she imposed on Bernard Smith. 'I hope, I *trust*, poor Miss Winston has been spared the agitation arising from tidings of our miseries. Weak and infirm as she is, the blow would be too much for her. She must hear nothing of our arrival in England, till, on my father's acquittal and release, I hasten to her arms and claim her blessing for her happy child.'

John Heaphy, overwhelmed by the intelligence he had received from Sir Henry Woodgate, sat gravely silent. It was a hard task to damp the sanguine hopes of his cousin; almost *too* hard for a heart so full of the best promptings of human nature!

'Let her at least enjoy a couple of hours' tranquillity, till we get to Maidstone,' thought he. 'Should things come to the worst, her father will be best to break it to her after all. Good Lord! that such a daughter should be wasted on a man like John Barnsley!'

CHAPTER XLV.

As they drew near the county-town, however, Margaret's 'tranquillity' was by no means such as to verify the good wishes of her kinsman.

On the eve of meeting her father after an absence that seemed an eternity, her restlessness grew painful to witness. The distance appeared endless—the inertness of horses and driver insupportable. She felt that they had delayed too long. They ought to have got off sooner from Clapton; —they ought not to have diverged from their way on their bootless errand to Stokeshill;—her impatience betrayed itself in a thousand self-accusations.

It was already nine o'clock. Margaret could not distinctly recall at what time her father had been wont to repair to his justice meetings—his meetings of the quarter-sessions. She fancied that the hour of assembling at Westerton town-hall was ten. But—as even John Heaphy could remind her,—the present was no business of the quarter-sessions. Her father had been arrested by special warrant for a capital crime; and, if conveyed to Maidstone for examination, it was because the county magistrates were there assembled for the opening of the Assizes.

'By the way, Margaret, I am perplexed to know where the boy should drive?'—said Heaphy, as the neat, white, county-town-looking toll-gate came in view. 'John Barnsley must have spoken beside the mark, my dear, in talking of a gaol, previously to his committal.—I should fancy he would be kept in custody at the inn, till had up to the town-hall for examination.—But all this is conjecture.—What do I know of such matters?'

'If we were to proceed at once to the town-hall?'—said Margaret, impatiently.

'The best thing will be for you to remain at the inn, while *I* make the necessary inquiries,' observed her cousin.

'Rather let me remain here in the carriage,' said Margaret, as they reached a street which she recollected as adjoining the gaol. 'But pray,—*pray*—do not loiter.—You may easily obtain information.'

As the chaise-door was opened by the postboy for Heaphy's departure, Margaret fancied that, in the chagrined countenance of a gentleman passing by at the moment, who mechanically raised his eyes to the travellers, she recognised the disagreeable face of Mr. Richard Dobbs!—Nothing was more probable than that he should be at Maidstone. He was there on Assize business,—he was there to give evidence against her father.—She turned away, sickening at the thought!

The town was already astir. The church bells were ringing, and people hurrying hither and thither in discharge of the business of a busy time. Margaret, who fancied that her cousin had only to ask and be answered touching the object of their anxiety, soon grew impatient for Heaphy's return. It was a hot July morning. The boy, dismounted

from his smoking horses, took off his hat,—leisurely wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, and dusted his boots with a wisp of hay;—then, pitying himself and his beasts, drew up the carriage into the shade: till Miss Barnsley felt angry at the resignation with which he prepared himself to be kept waiting. At length, after a delay of a quarter of an hour,—twenty minutes,—nearly half-an-hour,—she determined to set off alone in quest of her father; and commenced her enterprise by requesting to be driven to the principal inn. But at the very moment the carriage entered the gateway, she was accosted by John Heaphy.

'Have you found him?—Where is he?'—was Miss Barnsley's hurried inquiry, attributing to fatigue the perturbed countenance of her cousin.

'He is *here*,' was the taciturn reply. 'You had better alight, Margaret.'

And having taken her arm under his, he conducted his anxious cousin along a corridor which she doubted not would lead to the room where her father was awaiting her. The people of the inn, with whom Heaphy appeared to have been engaged in previous explanation, stood aloof as she passed;—but a door being thrown open by her companion, she was ushered into an empty-room

'Not *here!*'—said she, attempting to draw back.—'Better take me to him at once!—I am sure my father must be impatient for me. Perhaps,' said she, interrupting herself on seeing that Heaphy made no movement to re-open the door—'perhaps he is engaged?'

'There are people with him,' replied John Heaphy, in a depressed voice, the singular tone of which his cousin must have been indeed pre-engrossed not to perceive.

'But you have told him that I am here?'

Heaphy was silent.

'*You*, at least, have seen him?'—she hastily added.

'I have!'

'How did you find him?—He must have passed a dreadful night—he must have suffered greatly—did he complain?'

'No, Margaret!'

And Miss Barnsley, who now caught a glimpse of the horror-stricken countenance of her cousin, became suddenly alarmed.

'You turn away your face, John,' cried she starting from the sofa on which he had placed her, and rushing towards Heaphy. 'You are agitated—something is amiss—things are going wrong—speak!—my father has been examined—fatal evidence has been brought forward!—Oh! my dear unhappy father!'

'Compose yourself, Margaret,' said John Heaphy, down whose usually stern, unalterable face, tears were silently rolling.

At sight of his emotion, she grasped his hands!—She could not immediately renew her questions; nor was her kinsman in any state to afford an answer. The good creature was striving to soften his expressions so as to spare the tender nature of his cousin. But the deep sensibilities struggling in his own bosom, eventually proved too powerful for his control.

'Your father,' said he, at length, with a painful effort, 'has escaped the condemnation of human law!'

'Escaped!—Heaven's mercy be praised!' interrupted Margaret, clasping her uplifted hands in thanksgiving. 'He has been acquitted, then, cousin?—He is *safe?*'—

'*He is dead!*'—said Heaphy, no longer able to repress the sobs which burst from his overcharged bosom. But in another moment, he started forward to receive into his arms the insensible form of his cousin. He had intended to break the news gently to her;—he had *intended*,—but the horror excited in his pious mind by gazing upon the breathless remains of his kinsman,—of a man who had presumed to rush from the award of a human tribunal to the eternal condemnation of his Maker,—completely overpowered him. For the first time in his life, John Heaphy was no longer master of himself,—unmanned by the frightful spectacle he had witnessed!

Nor did the sight of Margaret's ghastly insensibility serve to restore his self-possession. But it was by strangers she was laid on a quiet bed,—tended, watched and comforted,—during the brief intervals between one fainting fit and another; Heaphy was under the necessity of appearing in the inquest-room, as next of kin to the deceased. Though summoned thither as a witness, it was to learn, rather than disclose, that he attended the call; and earnest was the attention he bestowed when the officers by whom the un-

fortunate Barnsley was escorted to Maidstone, gave evidence of the hourly increasing agitation of their prisoner's mind after parting from his daughter, and his alarming excitement under the irritation of what he persisted in declaring to be an illegal arrest. Within half-an-hour of his arrival at Maidstone, it appeared, Mr. Barnsley had seized his opportunity (while the attention of Sandys was momentarily distracted,) to put a period to his existence.

By what means the implement with which he effected his purpose had been obtained did not appear. The jury was apprised by Heaphy that the unfortunate man had passed three previous nights without rest;—that, on arriving from a hurried journey, under the impression of finding an only brother on his death-bed, he had been arrested and hurried off by the individuals by whose intrigues he was decoyed into the snare:—and after the establishment of facts so likely to produce a paroxysm of mental derangement, the jury proclaimed itself satisfied, in a verdict of—'LUNACY.'

John Heaphy was probably the only person present who addressed a prayer to Heaven, that this certification of Barnsley's irresponsibility for his actions, might be eternally confirmed by the mercy of his Creator!

Had Heaphy been susceptible at that moment of any other feeling towards his uncle than horror at his self-seeking presumption, he might have been gratified by the testimonies afforded to his memory by the respectable persons assembled. Warm with the sympathy awaiting the newly dead, some loudly expressed their opinion that the charge against poor Barnsley was frivolous and vexatious, and the means by which it had been brought to bear, every way unjustifiable. Among the jury, were several gentlemen of the neighbourhood, who, having seen him depart from Kent, a hale, active, stirring man of business, were unable to gaze unmoved upon the grey-haired and wasted corpse exhibited to their examination.

High and low were prompt to admit that John Barnsley had been an unfortunate man!—His entanglements had been none of his own creation. He had been driven out of Kent by the subtlety of another; and by the subtlety of another, invited back for persecution. They did not examine very closely into the legalities of the case—the mul-

titude seldom do. It was enough that George Holloway was not on the spot to justify the special warrant he had granted. It was enough that Richard Dobbs, Benjamin Adams, and Co. were alive and flourishing. It was enough that the mangled remains of John Barnsley were lying in a parish shell, redeemed only by the indulgence of a jury from the ignominious penalties inflicted upon self-murder!

If, in matters of love, the absent are ever in the wrong, in matters of legislation the absent are ever in the right. John Barnsley's dethronement from power, and absence from Kent, were of service to his renown. There had been a reaction in his favour. The neighbourhood had suffered by the loss of the man of business; the neighbourhood recognised his merits. The parish of Stokeshill had retrograded under the thriftless auspices of the inexperienced Woodgates; the town of Westerton had stood still under the feuds of rival attorneys. The activity of John Barnsley had accordingly come to be regretted; and his disinterestedness to be honoured in the land.

Lord Shoreham, finding his lady disavowed by the neighbourhood and the neighbourhood of Parson Drewe a serious evil, had shut up his house and gone abroad. Wynnex Abbey was going to ruin faster than it had been raised to prosperity. The farmers whose fences had been broken down by the Wynnex harriers, and who found Lord Shoreham as much too rigorous in preserving his game as the trustee had been too indifferent, began to talk of the good old times of my Lord's minority; while Timmins the brazier, and other worthies of Westerton, who discovered Lady Woodgate to be fonder of beautifying her grounds than of settling her accounts, decided that the Barnsleys were at least punctual in their payments, and that the long vituperated man of business was a good neighbour after all.

Such was the decree of the county during Barnsley's absence: it was more than confirmed on his decease. Kent took part in his wrongs, Kent took part in his sufferings. It was indebted to him for its perfection of prison discipline; it was indebted to him for poor-house economy; it was indebted to him for roads without end, and railroads without a beginning.

A deputation of the country gentlemen assembled at

Maidstone by the approach of the Assizes, including Lord Walmer and Lord Henry Marston, waited accordingly upon John Heaphy, with a proposal to show their respect by attending the remains of the deceased to their last abode.

But John was too right-minded to acquiesce. His uncle had been about to answer for his frailties to the rigour of a human tribunal; and was gone to answer for his crimes to the justice of a divine. To *his* mind, the very deed afforded presumption of guilt; at all events, it was no case and no moment to indulge in the pomps and vanities of life. Having offered his thanks to the deputation, he expressed his determination that the funeral should be as private and unostentatious as possible.

One last home in Kent, meanwhile, was yet John Barnsley's own; the vault he had constructed for his wife in the church of Stokeshill. 'He has a right to lie beside her,' mused John Heaphy, after having bowed out the congress of county lords and country gentlemen. 'Mary, it is true, was an angel—John Barnsley a sinful man;—but they were conjoined for better for worse, and the grave shall not put them asunder.'

Already, ere Margaret was sufficiently capable of self-government for resistance, he had conveyed his bewildered cousin to Westerton, and placed her in the arms of Miss Winston, which opened to receive her with more than motherly affection; and the sight of her venerable friend produced the first flood of tears which relieved the anguish of Margaret Barnsley.

'Leave her to herself, and you leave her to GOD!' was the exhortation of the plain-spoken John Heaphy to her venerable friend. 'HE will give her strength for the trial! *He* will grant her peace when it is good for her to be comforted. The moment the funeral is over, I shall carry you both away with me; Kent is not the place just now for Margaret Barnsley.'

Though Heaphy had eluded the officious courtesies of the Maidstone deputation, he was not unsupported in his officiation as chief mourner. Sir Henry Woodgate, uninvited, joined the funeral procession; and ministered in the last offices to his rival of Stokeshill Place. Apprehensive of the shock which the funeral bell, tolling for a Barnsley, might

inflict upon her shattered nerves, Lady Woodgate had been persuaded to remove to Hawkhurst Hill, for change of air; Hawkhurst, which had witnessed for so many years the decline of her mother, and was now fated to witness her own.

Meanwhile, Margaret Barnsley's character was not such as to admit of prolonged extinction of her moral faculties. Her cousin gave her time to recover undisturbed the control of her feelings. He knew that her first wild emotions of despair would subside; and did not desire her to throw off *too* rapidly the depression produced by so severe a chastising of Providence as the loss of a parent, under circumstances so awful. But he rejoiced when a tinge of returning health re-animated her more than marble paleness, and he beheld her assume that mild holiness of resignation which can murmur, amid all its sorrows,—God's will be done!

At Miss Barnsley's entreaty, Heaphy officiated in the arrangement of her pecuniary affairs; and even hazarded an encounter with the perils and dangers of foreign parts, to supersede the necessity of her return to Brussels. In forwarding the necessary arrangements at Groenenwald, he formed an acquaintance with the mild but high-minded Prince d'Artenberg, than whom no inhabitant of the continent was, perhaps, better gifted to diminish his prejudices against those who neither spoke his language nor professed his creed. But though John Heaphy consented to be the bearer to Miss Barnsley of the Prince's entreaties for permission to renew in England, a suit securing to her future days a brilliant position in life, he by no means regretted to find that, in renouncing Groenenwald, his kinswoman was bidding an eternal farewell to Belgium; that Margaret was willing to admit the claims of the Prince upon her friendship, only on his consenting to withdraw his pretensions as a lover.

Her refusal of this splendid alliance completed the reverence in which she was held by her cousin. Persuaded that his uncle had been tempted to deviate from the path of rectitude through an over-covetousness of the things of this world, which had devoted his earlier days to business to the exclusion of all the holy charities of life as husband, father, kinsman, friend, John Heaphy rejoiced to perceive that

Barnsley's daughter was as indifferent to the vanities of life as susceptible of every gentler affection of human nature.

At one moment, indeed, she felt inclined to devote the remainder of her days to an unreasonable perpetuation of her sorrows. After the introduction of an unsightly public way over the lawn of Stokeshill Place, the property, though deteriorated as a residence, was sold to great advantage by Sir Henry Woodgate, the house pulled down, and the estate dismembered and apportioned to agricultural purposes. Of the lots into which it was divided, there was a secluded cottage adjoining a small coppice, on the appropriation of which Margaret Barnsley had set her heart.

Fortunately the indulgence of her inclinations was frustrated by a higher bidder; and she submitted with patience, discovering that Agnes Woodgate was the successful pretendant—that good Agnes, who, estranged from her nephew's home by the sullen hauteur of his wife, was eager to spend the remainder of her days amid the happy haunts of her girlhood.

'At *her* age, natural enough,' was John Heaphy's remark, on hearing of her purpose. 'But for *you*, Margaret, other duties are in store. In a few months your uncle will be here. You must not decide upon your future plans till the arrival of Sir Clement. You must not persist in your predilection for a spot so fatal to its successive possessors as Stokeshill Place.'

CHAPTER XLVI.

Five years elapsed—five years of grave and humble resignation—ere Margaret Barnsley could bring herself to believe that Providence had earthly compensations in store to requite the sufferings of her youth.

It was perhaps fortunate for her that the uncle, by whose arrival in England she was first roused from the state of lethargy into which she had fallen upon the death of her father, proved to be a peevish valetudinarian; by whose exactions upon her time and affection her whole exertion was speedily absorbed.

Sir Clement Barnsley, who had returned to his native country prepared to find happiness in his declining years

from the companionship of his brother, appeared to *resent* rather than lament the end of his unhappy relative. He knew nothing, indeed, of the details of that fatal event. He was told only that John Barnsley had died suddenly during his own voyage from Calcutta; and his fraternal instincts having long subsided into selfish indolence, he was content to inquire no further. It was enough that he must resign his expectation of maundering in social amity with his brother over his daily claret; it was enough that the major-general could no longer command in the squire a winter-evening listener for his reminiscences of Chingherabad. Destitute of a single friend to enliven the populous solitude of the tawny Invalidery at Cheltenham, Sir Clement began to fancy himself injured by the family which had hastened before into the grave, leaving him all but lonely on the unfamiliar soil of Great Britain.

It was some time, indeed, before the worthy Heaphy could persuade him to regard his niece as a substitute for the friend and gossip he had expected to find in his brother; and it was some time before Margaret could be prevailed upon to feel that new duties were assigned her in the necessity of accepting a home with the surviving relative of her father. But when at length installed in the beautiful retreat of Elmbush, purchased by Sir Clement, on the Devonshire coast, she found that her efforts to soothe the irritation and secure the comfort of the disappointed egotist were advantageous in withdrawing her attention from her own misfortunes.

Sir Clement was, in fact, an unsparing claimant on the time of his niece. Separated at an early age from his family, and conscious that he had pushed his way through the world, at the loss of health and enjoyment, to amass a fortune likely to minister to their happiness rather than his own, he felt that he had a right to command the affection of the heiress on whose head he was about to concentrate his hard-earned gains. Margaret rebelled against this mean appropriation of her tenderness; but she gave to compassion and a sense of duty the attentions which were not to be purchased by her uncle's gold. Even from his grave her father pleaded for the fretful old man who imposed so heavy a burthen on her patience!

In some particulars, however, Sir Clement supplied ample extenuation for the tediousness of his society. He had acceded to Margaret's conditions of affording a refuge to the declining years of her venerable friend; and when at length Miss Winston closed at Elmbush that blameless life, whose mediocrity was elevated by sentiments of the purest womanly tenderness, enjoyed and imparted, Margaret's gratitude was called forth by the cordiality with which the old general continued to welcome to his beautiful retreat the only surviving object of her regard.

Sir Henry Woodgate, who had taken refuge from the loneliness of widowhood in the arduous duties of public life, was in the habit of visiting Elmbush Park during the annual intervals of his official slavery. It was there he found companionship worthy to soothe and elevate the contemplative leisure of ministerial life,—it was there he found happiness,—it was there he found sympathy, oblivion for past sorrow, and hopes for years to come!

Hitherto, however, the almost stern gravity of Miss Barnsley had repressed his declarations of passionate attachment; and had he not done justice to the delicacy of mind which decided that the lapse of years ought to wear out all trace of their former cares and pledges ere they commenced a new career of prosperity and joy, Sir Henry would have found it difficult to support the long months of absence by which he was made to pay the penalty of a few weeks' enjoyment of her society.

But a period was approaching which was to affix the crowning seal upon the destinies of Barnsley's daughter. The increasing infirmities of Sir Clement suddenly determined him to pass the ensuing winter in the capital for medical advice, and the solace of his club; and on quitting Elmbush, Margaret felt anxious lest Woodgate might no longer submit to the barriers which absence had enabled her to maintain between them beyond the ordinary term of courtship.

It was on a tranquil evening of the autumn of 1836,—serene as her own soul and sweet as her own nature,—that Margaret, sauntering along the ridge of furzy hills which divides the domain of Elmbush from the London road, revolved in her mind the changes she was about to experience

in quitting the beautiful spot to which she had begun to attach herself. Assigning more importance than was their due to the influence exercised by country duties and pursuits in the tranquillization of her mind, she dreaded lest, deprived of the interest afforded by her village, her flower-garden, her poor, she should find the peevishness of her uncle difficult to support. She fancied that the even tenour of her life was about to be fatally destroyed; or, that the cares of her early days were, perhaps, on the eve of recommencement.

Such was the auspicious moment at which Sir Henry Woodgate was fated to flutter her spirit with the offer of his heart and hand!

The sight of his travelling carriage was a welcome surprise: the sound of his voice a cheering incident. Prepared by her desponding mood to appreciate at its just value the devotion of a warm, faithful, and confiding heart, she found it impossible to withhold the confession of her long-repressed partiality. Both were too wise, too feeling, to revert to the past; both were soon too happy not to invest every hope of their hearts, every thought of their minds, in projects of happiness for the future. Both had suffered deeply,—both had borne patiently. Still in the pride of womanly beauty, Margaret's gentle demeanour was dignified by the inspiration of a pure and contemplative spirit. Lovely as ever, and more than ever loveable, she was the very wife to secure happiness to a man of sense, not *too* wise or *too* good to enjoy the pleasures of a world to the advancement of whose sterling interests his time and thoughts were dedicated.

It was not at Elmbush, however, that the engagement between the happy lovers was to be announced to Sir Clement. When comfortably settled in Hanover Square for the winter, within telegraphic reach of the head-quarters of Oriental sociability, their mutual friend, John Heaphy, was deputed to break to his uncle the secret of Margaret's approaching marriage, softened by a promise that his niece would during his lifetime reside in his immediate neighbourhood.

It is now two years since the happy completion of these projects. The happiness of Sir Henry and Lady Woodgate has undergone no change, unless in the accession of mutual

affection produced by the birth of a lovely girl, fair as the happy mother from whose heart she has effaced the last remaining trace of misfortune. The Buckhursts, the Chiltons, whose frivolous affections were based on a less stable foundation, sometimes bend a contemptuous glance from their career of fashionable folly upon the happy wife and mother, whose virtues afford the best reward to one of the most rising of our public men. But even Gus (a resident of some years' standing in the Bench) and Parson Drewe (who may be seen any day of the three hundred and sixty-five, sauntering with his hands in his pockets on the pier at Calais) are heard to admit that, while the ruinous and tenantless condition of Wynnex Abbey during the absenteeism of their flighty nephew affords a humiliating monument to the degradation of the house of Drewe, the virtues of Margaret Barnsley have effaced all memory in the county of Kent of the errors of the Man of Business: while the distinguished place occupied by Sir Henry in the respect of society, and the veneration of the country, imparts a lasting interest to the site of the now demolished glories of—STOKESHILL PLACE!

THE END.

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